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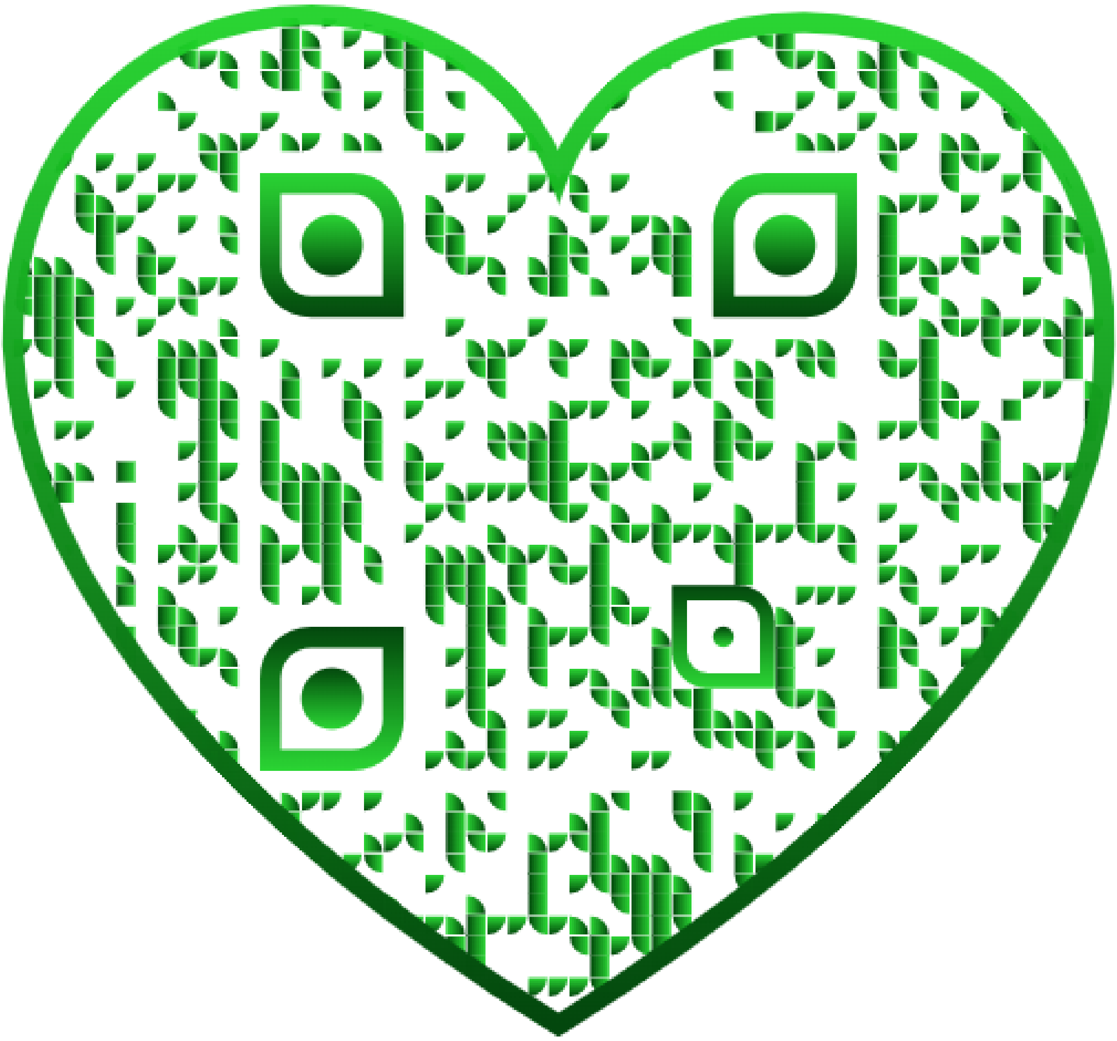
- MYSTIC M5200XL
- SUPRA SA
- ROBALO R300
- BOSTON WHALER 210 VANTAGE
- HIGHFIELD VELOX 420
- CENTURION Nv233
- TIGÉ ULTRÉ 23ZX

JUNE/JULY 2025
VOLUME 98 NUMBER 5



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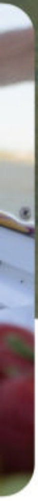

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FEATURES

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The MasterCraft XStar 23 is completely redesigned to shred in 2025.
Photo: Courtesy MasterCraft Boats

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By Kevin Falvey

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Why some boat parts are boat places, and vice versa.

Boating probably uses as much jargon as any other enthusiast activity. Jargon might describe actions of the boat itself, such as using "porpoising" to describe a boat with its bow rising and falling. Or jargon can describe actions of boaters, as in saying that the captain is belaying a line to a cleat or is fending off. Jargon might also describe boating equipment and gear, such as the anchor rode, or when referring to the propeller as the prop, wheel or screw.

Let's parse a few terms that originated as part names for building wooden boats and that have evolved to now describing not a part, but rather a location, on the boat.

Consider the word "stem" and associated terms. Originally, stem referred to the timber at the bow of the boat to which the planks were fastened. At its lower end, it connected to a "gripe," which made the transition between keel and stem. A boat, usually a sailboat, is said to gripe, by the way, when it tends to turn into the wind, which it will do if its gripe is particularly deep.

On fiberglass boats, these are not separate parts but rather locations on the hull's exterior. The stem is the upright section at the very bow, and "forefoot" replaces "gripe." The keel is not a separate part, but instead refers to the centerline of the boat's bottom where the hull panels intersect longitudinally.

> Let's parse a few terms that originated as part names for building wooden boats and that have evolved to now describing not a part, but rather a location, on the boat.

If you run a flat-bottomed boat, it might not have a keel, but it might feature a skeg, which is a finlike appendage, and a term also used to describe the lowest part of the gear case on an outboard or sterndrive. It's right below the torpedo, don'tcha know? Skegs are integral to engines but often are separate parts on a boat, making them the exception that proves the rule.

Making Waves

On Board With

Gordon Harrison

GET ON BOARD

Go *On Board With* firefighter, pro wake athlete and *Boating* captain, model and action star, Gordon Harrison, on page 19.

Another bit of boat description that was once an actual boat part but is now a location is the gunwale. A wale refers to a strake, or line or planking, along the side of a wooden ship or boat. (Obtaining agreement between boaters on clear distinctions between "wale," "strake" and "plank" requires at least two rum drinks in any seaside gin mill.) The "gun" part refers to "cannon." The gunwale was the strake through which the gun ports were installed. See?

Often truncated as "gunnel" or the saltier "gun'l" (but please, never "gunwhale"; it has nothing to with spouty), the word "gunwale" is used today to describe the top of the deck—the top, or cap, on the boat's sides. (Topsides refers to the part of the hull between chine and gunwale.) Real gunwales weren't always that high up, and were often lower. For this reason, I have always believed that the term "covering board" made more sense because this is the boat part that covers the top of the ribs (or frames) at the very height of the topsides. I know that I am not alone. There is a contingent of fellow covering boarders out there. I run across them from time to time.

Enjoy the issue.

Kevin Falvey

Kevin Falvey, Editor-in-Chief
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YOUR PRESCRIPTION FOR THE BIGGEST HEADACHE IN BOATING

Take care of your boat without blowing a fuse. Boat Planet's online platform connects boaters with top-notch service providers.

By Ric Burnley

Where boaters go to find trusted local pros.
boatplanet
SHUTTLE

We've all been there. Load the boat with gear, prep the tackle, store the food and drinks, everyone is excited about enjoying a day on the water, turn the key to start the motor—and nothing happens. Ugh!

Michael Kiel, founder and CEO of Boat Planet, has been there too. "There's nothing worse than looking forward to boating and then something goes wrong," he sighs. That's why Kiel developed Boat Planet, an online boating resource that helps boaters connect with service providers. After several bad experiences with mechanics and detailers, Kiel was frustrated with the status quo. "I would arrive to the marina on a Friday afternoon to find a dirty boat with the cover still on," he remembers. One time, a mechanic left a greasy motor part on Kiel's upholstery to signal the job was done. "Why was I spending a lot of money for this level of service?" he asked.

So Kiel started a Facebook group for boaters. "I realized a lot of people are facing the same problems," he says. He also realized service providers were looking for a new way to reach customers. Tapping his experience in marketing and inspired by user-friendly rideshare apps, Kiel cooked up Boat Planet, a painless way for boaters to book service, repair, detailing and more.

To use BoatPlanet.com, a boater submits a request by filling out an online form and providing photos and a detailed description of the required work. Boat Planet sends the request for a quote to several local service providers in the boater's area. The site hosts over 35,000 certified service providers backed by user reviews.

After the request is submitted, the boater receives up to three quotes for the required service. Kiel recommends including photos and detailed descriptions for the most accurate quote.

Once the boater accepts a quote, they pay for the job on Boat Planet's site. Boat Planet holds the funds until the boater verifies the work was completed satisfactorily. Then Boat Planet immediately releases the payment to the provider's bank account. "We provide financial protection to the boater while ensuring the service provider gets paid for the work," Kiel adds.

Any issues between the boater and service provider are handled by Boat Planet's online help center. "Ninety-nine percent of the time, we find a solution to the problem," Kiel says. Both boaters and providers appreciate the easy communication through the Boat Planet platform.

Boat Planet boasts over 100,000 users and a nationwide network of service pros. Available services range from maintenance and repair to detailing, electronics and more. Creating a job request on BoatPlanet.com takes only minutes. Quotes come in as quickly as a couple of hours, but can vary depending on the boat's location.

Boat Planet is developing an industry-first feature that will send boaters service reminders based on their boat's location, usage and the time of year. The company will also launch a mobile app to improve the user experience. "I want to provide boaters with everything they need to enjoy the boating lifestyle with less stress and headaches," Kiel says.

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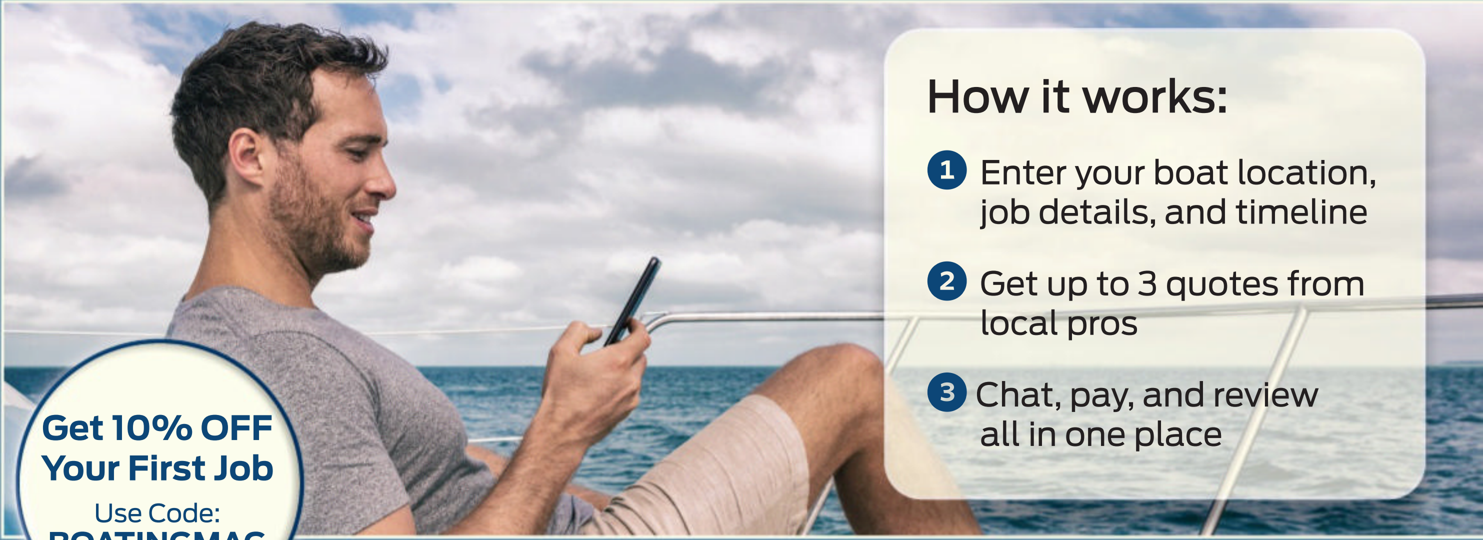
Boat Planet makes it convenient and easy to book service, repair, and detailing for your boat.



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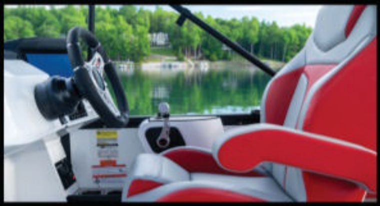

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ON BOARD WITH
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FIRST IMPRESSION
GEARHEAD

ON BOARD WITH

Gordon Harrison

Firefighter and Pro Wakeboarder

Gordon Harrison is the consummate watersports enthusiast. Growing up lakeside in central Virginia, he naturally gravitated toward skiing and wakeboarding before moving to Orlando after high school to train and compete on the Pro Wakeboard Tour. Later, he would be drawn to the beaches of Florida's Space Coast to pursue ocean surfing and, his latest passion, foiling. It's the now-30-year-old firefighter's years spent as *Boating*'s own Derek Zoolander, however, that make him of interest to our readers. Harrison has long been one of the smiling faces for our annual Buyers Guide photo shoots, entrusted to drive everything from PWC to go-fasts, take his turn in the wakes surfing or foiling, and never, ever forget the golden rule: Don't look at the camera! —*Jeff Hemmel*

SCAN ME

To read the full interview, scan this tag or visit boatingmag.com/gordon-harrison.

So how does one go from hardcore watersports athlete to *Boating* supermodel?

The transition actually came pretty easily. During my time as a pro wakeboarder, I was supported by Supra Boats and did many photo shoots over the years, where I learned how everything works and what's needed. In my position on the *Boating* shoots, I'm kinda like a Swiss Army knife. I could be assigned the role of athlete, boat driver or model. It's fun and will keep you on your toes.

Any highlights that stand out over the years?

My top highlights are seeing old friends in the boating industry and getting a first look at the next year's new boats. Living the beach life now, it's nice to get back on the lake and on sick boats. I gotta add the helicopter shoots too. Even though I moved away from Orlando, I find it so cool that I still get to plug into the towed-watersport industry and work with *Boating* magazine.

I'm guessing it's not all sunshine and rainbows.

The most challenging part is doing these photo shoots in cold weather. We run these boats at over 30 mph, dressed like it's 90 degrees out and acting like we're on the best summer vacation ever. Meanwhile, the photo crew might be decked out in thermal underwear and foul-weather gear. It's something to bear but comical at the same time. The next challenge would be quickly adapting to boats I've never driven. There are always new controls or accessories to learn to make sure we all have a safe ride.

PHOTO: TOM KING

TRAILER SAFETY

Most boaters are not fortunate enough to live on the water. If you can't find or afford dock space at the local marina, you're like most Americans in that you trailer your boat as well as store it on its trailer. It's a big responsibility, therefore, to ensure that your towing and trailer setup is safe for travel, and won't hurt your boat when it's on the trailer. So, what do you know about trailer safety and maintenance? —*John Tiger* (Answers on page 22)

1. You're inspecting your trailer for the upcoming season, and looking at the leaf spring suspension, you notice that the top leaf in your multileaf setup is cracked and broken. What's your move?

A. Measure the spring from end to end, go to a trailer shop to buy a replacement leaf spring assembly, and install it.
B. Bring the trailer to a trailer repair shop and have that spring set replaced.
C. Just leave it; because it's a multileaf spring set, the other leaves will support the load just fine.
D. Take the trailer to a welding shop and have them weld that crack. It will be fine after that.
E. A and B are both good solutions.
F. None of the above

2. Your galvanized steel trailer is quickly rusting out, and you're looking for a new one. Your dealer is offering an aluminum trailer as a replacement. Is the aluminum trailer better?

A. Yes. It will be lighter, just as strong, and will age better because it won't rust like a steel trailer.
B. No. Steel trailers are old-school, and when it comes to trailering, old-school is better.
C. The aluminum trailers corrode too, just not as quickly or as visibly as steel ones. You still have to keep it salt-free by washing it, and watch for corrosion around critical areas as it ages.
D. A and C
E. None of the above

3. You're learning to back your trailer down the ramp and practicing by using only the side-view and rearview mirrors because your uncle told you, "Only sissies back up trailers by looking over their shoulder." Is he right?

A. Your uncle is right. Using only the mirrors is the correct way to back a trailer.
B. As you back down the ramp, your trailer can somewhat disappear in the mirrors, and it becomes harder to see and back up accurately. This issue can be resolved by looking over your shoulder. There's nothing wrong with that. Any method you are most comfortable with is the correct method for you.
C. Both A and B are incorrect. You need a rearview camera to back a trailer correctly.

4. You're rewiring your trailer and installing new LED lights and wiring. You're using the kit's included Scotch-Lok plastic crimp connectors. Your neighbor stops by and laughs, saying that you should be using heat-shrink-covered crimp connectors. Is he right?

A. Yes, he's right. The Scotch-Lok connectors will corrode and fall apart quickly in use.
B. No, those connectors have been proven over years of production. They're included in the kit because they work.
C. Both A and B are wrong. The wires should be soldered and sealed.
D. A, B and C are all OK methods.

5. Your boat trailer's keel rollers are old and cracked, and they don't move on their shafts. But you tow to the local ramp only once a week or so. They'll be OK, right? No need to replace them.

A. They've survived this long—another season won't hurt.
B. Replace them after the next season—they'll be shot by then.
C. Better to replace them now, before one splits and damages your hull.
D. A and B
E. None of the above

6. On extended trailering trips, should you stop every once in a while to check the tire and hub temperatures to see if they're getting too warm?

A. If you've prepped and greased the hubs properly, and the tire pressure is correct before you leave, there's no need to keep checking.
B. Checking the hub and tire temperatures at each rest stop and gas stop along the way could very well save you from a major hassle. If you carry a spare tire, hub and grease, plus the tools to change them, you might save yourself from being stranded on the side of the highway.
C. You should stop every 50 miles or so to check.
D. None of the above

1,260

Largest documented spin, measured in degrees, by a wakeboarder, first landed in 2008 by professional boarder Danny Harf.

PHOTO: COURTESY WESTMARINE; SOURCE FOR STATISTIC: CABLEWAKE.COM

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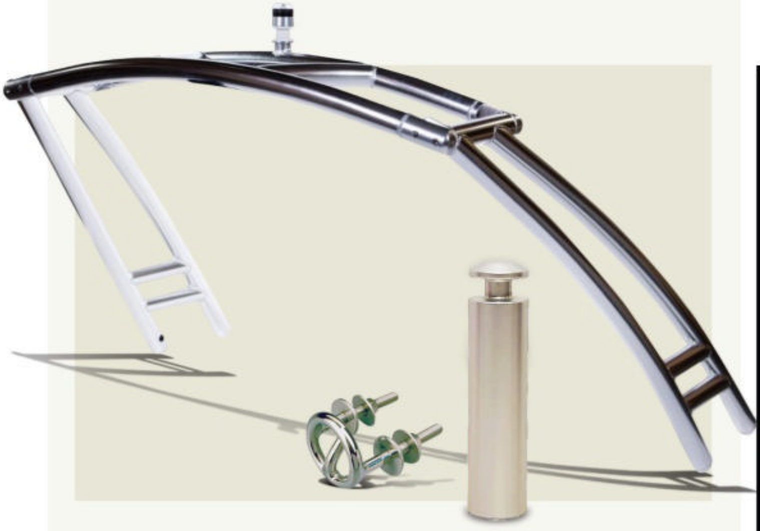


WATERSPORTS TOW POINTS

Almost every boater, whether they're watersports fanatics or enjoy it casually, has the idea to take someone tubing, skiing or boarding behind their boat. But not all tow points are created equal, and the right type of tow point depends on the sport you're pursuing. Tubing, skiing and wakeboarding all have different requirements. Here are three common types of watersports tow points for your boat. —*Pete McDonald*

TOW TOWER
MONSTER TOWER
MTK WAKEBOARD TOWER

THE PULL: Towers are the best choice for wakeboarding, with the goal of elevating the tow point at least 6 feet above the water line. While pylons and towing eyes typically pull a boarder down after an aerial move, a line attached to a higher point allows the rider to elevate upward, catching more air. The elevated tow point also helps keep the rope out of the boarder's way during tricks.

THE SNAG: You should absolutely never attach a tube to a tow tower because it could cause the tube to flip or catch way too much air. They're also not recommend for skiing.

PRICE: $1,699; monstertower.com

TOW EYE
SEA DOG
TRANSOM-MOUNTED STAINLESS-STEEL SKI-TOW EYE

THE PULL: Mounted on the center of the transom, a tow eye is the ideal spot to tether a tow rope for tubing. You'll typically find tow eyes on sterndrive boats or inboards, where the transom is unobstructed. It keeps the towline centered and above the water, so it's ideal for tubing and serviceable for water-skiing. It can be used for wakeboarding but is not ideal. Make sure the eye is mounted into a backing plate and secured to the transom with through-bolts.

THE SNAG: Doesn't work for outboard boats, and its low mounting point limits the ability of wakeboarders to catch air.

PRICE: $30.44; amazon.com

TOW PYLON
PRO DECK
ADJUSTABLE SKI-TOW PYLON

THE PULL: Pylons work best when mounted in the center of the cockpit to elevate the rope above the engine compartment and transom to give the skier a wide swing on a slalom course. Many boats have the option for a ski-tow pylon that mounts in a base along the transom, which elevates the towline above the transom or an outboard. There are also aftermarket pylons with a "pyramid" pylon that mounts on the cockpit deck.

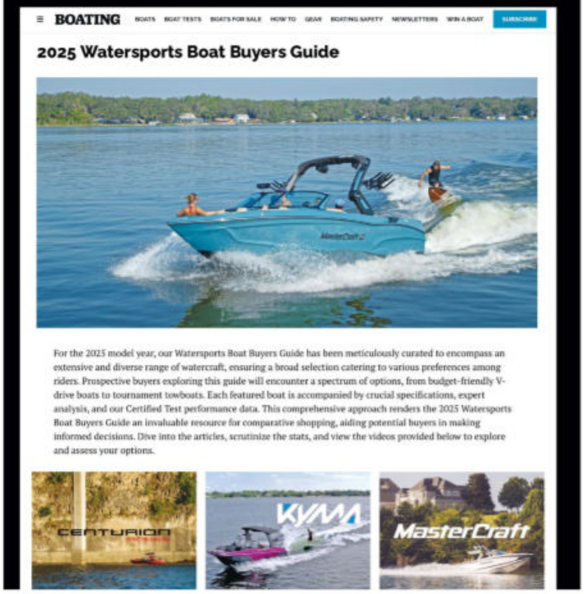
THE SNAG: Pylons typically don't raise the tow point high enough for high-level wakeboarding and are not recommended for towing tubes.

PRICE: $503.99; overtons.com

ONLINE THIS MONTH

WATERSPORTS

Because this is our watersports issue, there's no better time or place to look for the best tow boats available. Check out our Buyers Guide to see offerings from the top watersports builders at boatingmag.com/watersports-boat-buyers-guide.



2025 Watersports Boat Buyers Guide

For the 2025 model year, our Watersports Boat Buyers Guide has been meticulously curated to encompass an extensive and diverse range of watercraft, ensuring a broad selection catering to various preferences among riders. Prospective buyers exploring this guide will encounter a spectrum of options, from budget-friendly V-drive boats to tournament towboats. Each featured boat is accompanied by crucial specifications, expert analysis, and our Certified Test performance data. This comprehensive approach renders the 2025 Watersports Boat Buyers Guide an invaluable resource for comparative shopping, aiding potential buyers in making informed decisions. Dive into the articles, scrutinize the stats, and view the videos provided below to explore and assess your options.

CAPTAIN'S TEST ANSWERS

(Answers from page 20)

1. E is the best answer. A, of course, is only if you have the tools and skills to replace the spring yourself.
2. D. Aluminum trailers are better but not "magic." They too must be maintained.
3. B. Whatever method (or combination of methods) that works for you is best.
4. A. However, C is also a good way, if you have soldering skills and the correct tools and supplies.
5. C is the only correct answer. Replace those old rollers now to avoid a big problem.
6. B. Checking often will help prevent problems along the way, and get you used to the correct average temperature of the hubs and tire sidewalls so that you'll be more attuned to potential problems.

CAPTAIN'S TESTS ONLINE

Test your knowledge of boating with more Captain's Tests at boatingmag.com/captains-test.

PHOTOS: COURTESY MONSTER TOWER, COURTESY SEA DOG (EYE), COURTESY CENTURION BOATS (PYLON)

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**2020 third-party study among U.S. boat owners with incomes $100k+

By Kevin Falvey

EVERGLADES
367 CX

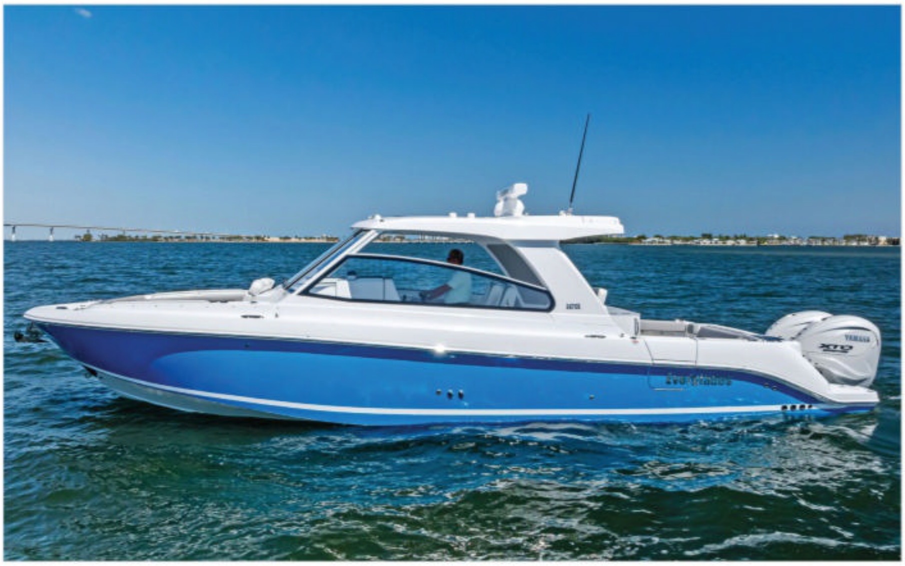

PHOTO: COURTESY EVERGLADES BOATS

The first in the new "7" line of crossover boats from Everglades, the versatile 367 CX entertains, overnights and fishes with equal ease. It boasts top construction, plus unique and innovative features.

A dual-console boat, the 367 CX's large aft cockpit is a fishing arena fitted with livewells, fish boxes, rod holders and other accoutrements. But, with concealed transom seating, a side boarding door that facilitates entertaining as well as allowing the landing of a trophy catch, and a retractable sunshade, this cockpit shines at the dockside party, the sandbar and the raft-up, and on the fishing grounds.

In fact, there are multiple social zones aboard, wherein the party can move to the bow lounge or under the hardtop. There is a grill, sink, refrigerator and storage, and three seats grace a module that spins around to face the seats aft and the galley forward, or vice versa. Even the helm seats spin to face the cockpit, so you can adjust the amenities to suit the moment.

Belowdecks, you'll find a tasteful cabin with a designer head, a double berth, and plenty of light. Powered by twin Yamaha 450 XTO Offshore outboards, it delivers thrilling performance. List price? $1,076,497.

· **LOA:** 37'3" · **BEAM:** 10'10" · **DISPLACEMENT (APPROX.):** 19,300 lb. · **FUEL CAPACITY:** 330 gal.

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Edgewater, Florida; evergladesboats.com

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By Kevin Falvey

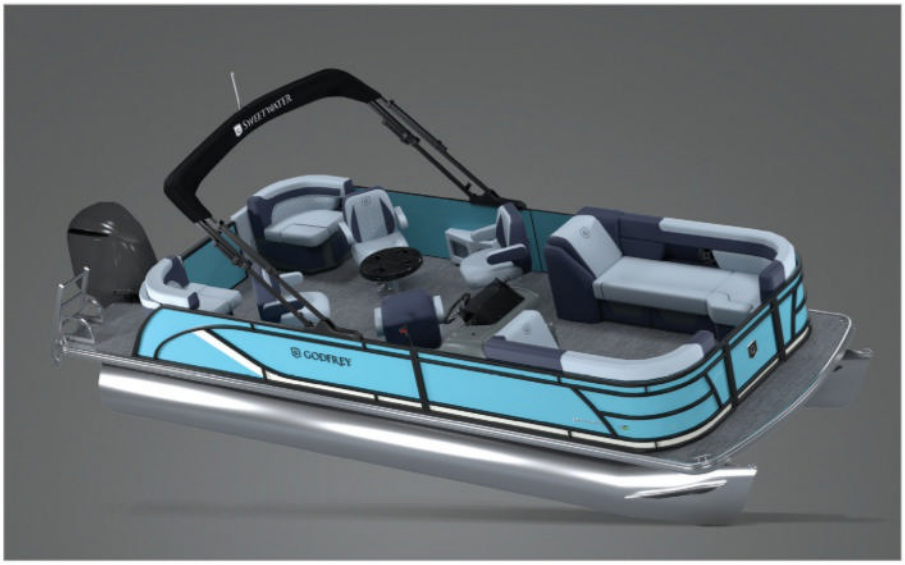

PHOTO: COURTESY GODFREY PONTOON BOATS

GODFREY
SWEETWATER ENTERTAINMENT

Available in 23- and 25-foot lengths, Godfrey's Sweetwater Entertainment series offers three distinct layouts.

Shown is the new Quad Social layout, with its centrally mounted table and four swiveling captain's chairs—one of which is the helm seat itself. This provides a clublike socializing experience. A bar model seats four people atop stools that face each other. Drink holders abound. Meanwhile, the third choice is a layout that provides you with a dinette table. Here, four can sit and enjoy a meal or play cards.

All three choices offer plush, ample lounges fore and aft. With soft cushions, rich upholstery and plenty of drink holders, you'll also find big stowage areas beneath these seats. The boats are rated for 12 or 14 people, depending upon the size you select.

For engines, Godfrey gives you the power of choice. Outboards up to 400 hp are available for the larger Sweetwater model boats (300 hp for smaller boats). Choose from Honda, Mercury, Suzuki and Yamaha motors.

The price for a Godfrey Sweetwater Entertainment series pontoon begins at $43,744 for the 23-foot model.

▪ **LOA:** 23'10" ▪ **BEAM:** 8'6" ▪ **DISPLACEMENT (APPROX.):** NA ▪ **FUEL CAPACITY:** 30 gal.

GODFREY PONTOON BOATS
Elkhart, Indiana; godfreypontoonboats.com

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Sea Swivel
Sea Swivel

SEA SWIVEL TROLLING MOTOR BRACKET

The Sea Swivel bracket enables more-effective deployment and retrieval, as well as secure stowage, of pivot-mounted trolling motors on boats such as center-consoles. It allows you to deploy a trolling motor in the correct position for better directional control. Sea Swivel also lets you adjust the stowed position to match the angle of the boat. It's built with aerospace-grade anodized aluminum and installs on an 8-inch-square flat mounting surface with a supplied backing plate. It fits a wide range of models from Garmin, Minn Kota, Power-Pole and Rhodan. $1,166.69; boatoutfitters.com

RARITAN MACERATOR PUMPS

Macerator pumps from Raritan are ignition-protected, encased in epoxy for use in damp head environments, and have a free-flow rate of 11 gpm. A spring-loaded Viton shaft seal prevents leakage, and a proprietary nitrile rubber impeller won't degrade if the pump runs dry. Its heavy-duty dual-cut chopper quickly breaks down waste and paper. The Model 53101 macerator has a waste-valve assembly that lets you close off the waste tube, so the pump can cleanly be disconnected. $365 for the 53101 12-volt pump; raritaneng.com

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GARMIN FORCE PRO TROLLING MOTOR

The new Force Pro scissor-mounted trolling motor from Garmin features a brushless electric motor and GPS guidance technology for effective positioning and anchor-lock performance. It includes a built-in GT56UHD ultra-high-definition scanning transducer. Force Pro also adds reverse thrust for slowing the boat or backing up through tight quarters. Dual gas springs and pull cable offer easy deployment and stowing. Available in 50- and 57-inch shaft lengths. Starting at $3,999.99; garmin.com

PHOTOS: (CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT) COURTESY SEA SWIVEL (2), COURTESY GARMIN, COURTESY RARITAN

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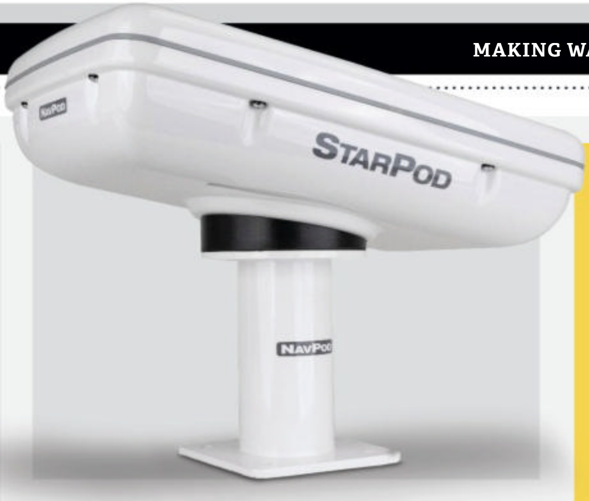
IOSSO MOLD & MILDEW STAIN REMOVER

Iosso Mold & Mildew Stain Remover removes tough stains on fabrics and hard surfaces, and it also eliminates fungi that cause musty odors and black staining. It contains no bleach or chlorine, so it won't damage or discolor fabrics. It's a perfect product for boat covers, Bimini tops, dodgers, and marine carpet and upholstery. The concentrated powder mixes quickly with water and is easy to use. Spray or sponge it on, allow to set for 15 minutes, and rinse. $15.35 for a 12-ounce jar; iosso.com

SHURHOLD WATER BLADE

The Flexible Water Blade squeegee from Shurhold quickly sheets water away from gelcoat, paint and glass to leave a clean, spot-free surface without mounds of wet towels or chamois to deal with. With its soft silicone edge, the 12-inch-wide Water Blade molds itself to curved shapes and surfaces. The full-length handle is ergonomically shaped for comfort and control. With a special adapter, it also attaches to Shurhold fixed and telescoping handles. $29.98 for the squeegee, plus $14.98 for the adapter; shurhold.com

PHOTOS: (CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT) COURTESY IOSSO, COURTESY STARPOD, COURTESY AQUALOC, COURTESY SHADOW-CASTER, COURTESY SHURHOLD



STARPOD SYSTEMS

The StarPod systems from NavPod provide a strong and streamline mounting solution for Starlink antennas on boats with hardtops, radar arches or other flat surfaces. A 10-degree wedge can be rotated to optimize the view of the sky. The StarPod also facilitates the runoff of rainwater, which can degrade a signal. The 8.5-inch aluminum base is powder-coated gloss white. The bottom base of the StarTower measures 7 inches square. Starting at $799; navpod.com

SC
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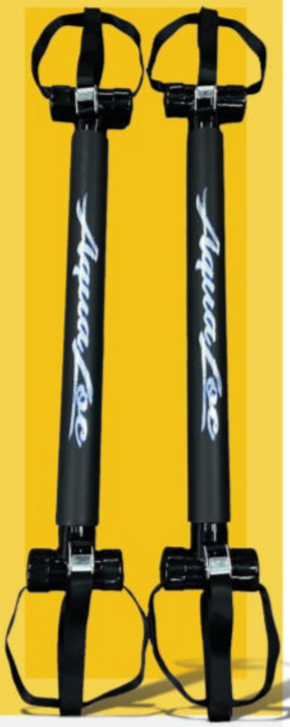
SCM-DLC-3CH

SHADOW-CASTER LED LIGHT-STRIP CONTROL

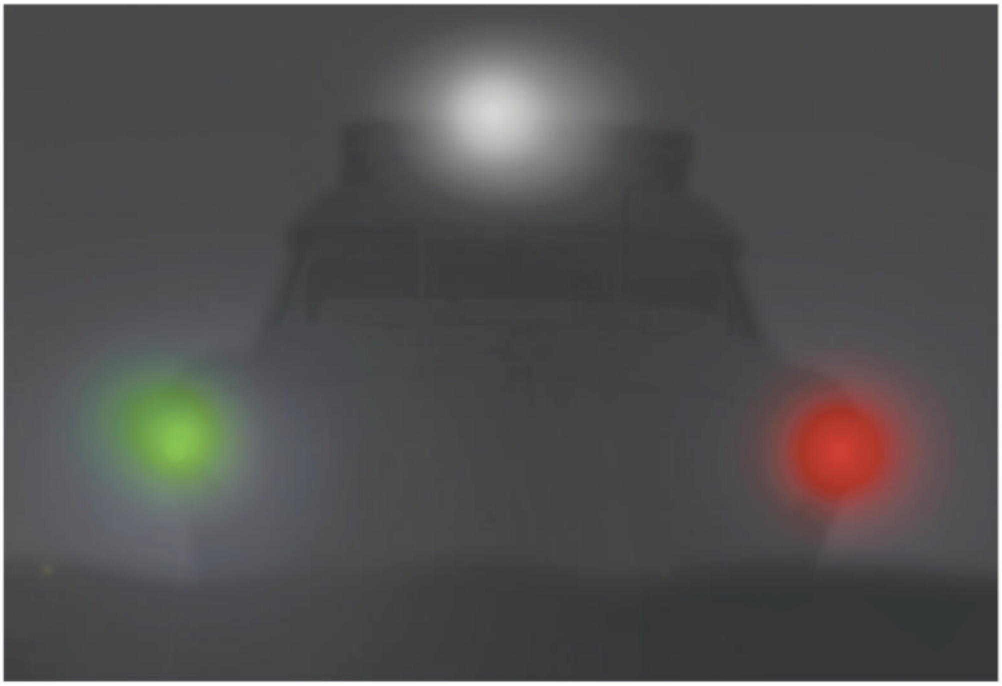
Shadow-Caster's Digital Light Controller makes it easy to program and operate three separate 12-volt LED light strips that create dazzling light shows on your boat. The three-channel controller can be used as a stand-alone product or networked into a Shadow-NET-enabled device such as the Shadow-Caster Light Commander. Measuring 3.5 inches by 2.6 inches by 1.2 inches, the controller and its connectors are IP67 waterproof. Twelve light shows are programmed into the device. $189.99; shadow-caster.com

AQUALOC TETHERING SYSTEM

AquaLoc's tethering and mooring device is designed for boats 17 to 25 feet in length overall, including pontoon boats. With a four-point system that ensures stability while rafting up at the sandbar or elsewhere, it keeps boats at just the right distance to socialize and walk between vessels, while preventing damage to hulls and gunwales. The 28-inch-long devices work in mild to moderate waves, and eliminate the need for lines and boat fenders. $149.99 per pair; boatoutfitters.com



By Pete McDonald



SEEING THE LIGHT

The ins and outs of boating nav lights.

When the shrimp would run on the full moon in wintertime down in South Florida, we'd head to the inlet in my friend's old Boston Whaler Montauk, armed with headlamps and long-handled dip nets hoping to cash in. I don't recall the exact age we started doing this, but I do remember the feeling of being on the water for the first time at night.

Objects on the shore looked like shadows, and unlit docks suddenly appeared as we slowly made our way down the canal to the inlet. The big thing though was that other boats, which would be fully visible from miles away in broad daylight, appeared to be nothing more than moving dots of light. So, from an early age, I understood the importance of being seen and knowing what you're seeing on the water after dark. It all starts with nav lights.

NAV-LIGHT BASICS For most people, nav lights are not even something you think about; when the sun goes down, you just hit a switch at the helm. But it's especially important to understand the requirements and to interpret what you see on someone else's boat at night.

Nav-light requirements are dictated both by COLREGS (International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea) and, in the United States, the Inland Navigation Rules. They're slightly different depending on the size of your boat, whether it's commercial or recreational, and whether you're under power or sail. Here's what applies to most boaters who'd be reading this magazine.

Powerboats underway that are shorter than 40 feet are required to have side lights at the bow—green to starboard and red to port—as well as an all-around white light that provides 360 degrees of visibility, mounted somewhere aft of the side lights. Often you can find this mounted on a hardtop or T-top. On small boats with no hardtops, an all-around white light will typically be mounted on a removable pole that inserts into an outlet at the stern. Regardless, the all-around light must be mounted at least 39.4 inches above the side lights. The side lights need to be visible for at least 1 nautical mile, and the all-around light for at least 2 nautical miles.

Knowing the light colors and where they're located lets you assess which part of a boat you're looking at, as well as the direction it's headed. If you see a red light followed by a white light in front of you, the other boat is crossing in front of you in a right-to-left direction; green followed by white indicates left-to-right. Red and green and white means it's coming toward you, and solid white means it's moving ahead of you in your direction. (Unless it's a boat on the hook displaying an all-around white "anchor light." More on that below.)

INTERPRETING OTHER NAV LIGHTS You might see other lights on the water that don't match up with what you'd expect from other boats, including those of commercial traffic, as well as fixed navigation aids such as lighted buoys and channel markers. Throw in lights from piers and jetties or even cars passing onshore, and it can get confusing. Here are just a few others.

STATIONARY WHITE LIGHT: Boats at anchor in a nondesignated anchorage area are required to display a white all-around light that's visible to others for 360 degrees around the boat.

YELLOW LIGHT: A yellow light indicates that a commercial vessel is towing or pushing a barge. If you see a yellow light—it might even look orange—on the water, steer clear. There could be a huge unlit gap between the stern light of the towing vessel and the last barge in tow. Seeing a formation of two or three vertical lights or a diamond-shaped light pattern also indicates a commercial vessel in the process of towing.

BLUE LIGHT: If you see flashing blue lights on the water, that's law enforcement. Behave.

PHOTO ILLUSTRATION: RYAN SWANSON

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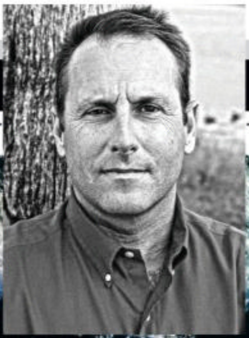
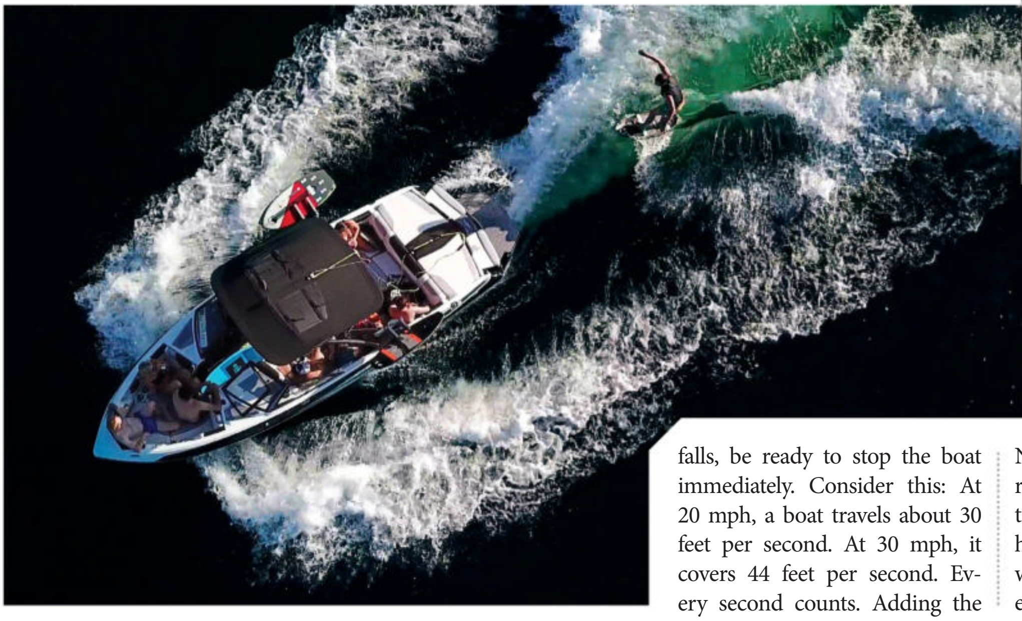
By Zenon Bilas





PROTECT AND SERVE

Safety during tow-sports activities starts with the person at the wheel.

Whether you're towing a skilled athlete or someone simply having fun on a tube, your most important responsibility remains the same: keeping the person—or people—in tow safe. That should always be your primary mission.

Keeping the person in tow safe isn't just a phrase—it's a mindset that develops as you gain experience driving for water-skiers, wakeboarders, surfers or tubers. So how do you develop this mindset as the person at the wheel and throttle? The first and most crucial step is recognizing that you're not just towing someone, but you're also responsible for their safety.

At the wheel, eliminate distractions so that you can concentrate on keeping those in tow safe. Develop the discipline to recognize that smartphones, music and conversations can wait until the tow-sports session is over. Focus on one thing at a time. When you're towing someone, there is no such thing as multitasking. Give it your full attention.

It's all about developing 360-degree awareness: knowing what's happening around the boat, on the water, and with those being towed. You must always know where the skier or rider is situated. To maintain this level of awareness, equip your boat with a tow-sports mirror. While specialized tow-sports boats come standard with mirrors, aftermarket mirrors are available for family boats, fishing boats and even pontoons. Even with a mirror, assign a dedicated spotter too.

You should always turn off the engine when someone is on the swim platform getting ready to go into the water or when a skier or rider is near the boat. When a skier or rider falls, be ready to stop the boat immediately. Consider this: At 20 mph, a boat travels about 30 feet per second. At 30 mph, it covers 44 feet per second. Every second counts. Adding the length of the ski or wakeboard line at 30 mph, it takes only about 5 seconds for the boat to be the length of a football field away from the fallen skier or rider. The sooner the boat stops, the closer it remains to the fallen rider, allowing for a quicker return. When the boat is close, it serves as a protective barrier between the person in the water and other nearby boats and watercraft.

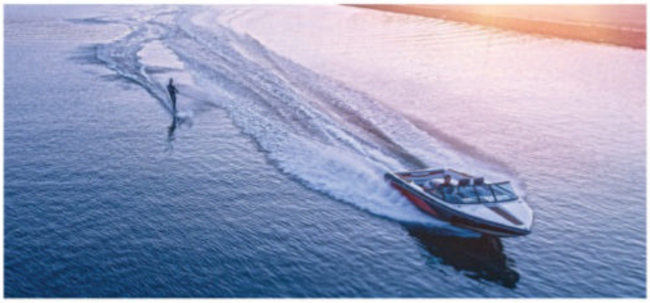
When towing multiple riders—such as with a tube—if one person falls, stop immediately rather than making a wide turn back to them. Never leave a fallen skier or rider vulnerable to other boat traffic. A responsible tow-sports helmsman is also sensitive to waterway conditions. Choose areas with minimal or no boating traffic. This might mean scheduling tow-sports sessions early in the morning or later in the afternoon, when waterways should be less crowded.

Another factor that can compromise focus and safety is alcohol or other substances. Impaired judgment and slowed reaction times increase the risk of accidents. Put simply, don't drink and drive. Not ever.

As the person at the wheel during tow sports, your role goes beyond simply towing—it's about ensuring the safety and success of the person in tow.

TIP

To complement protective strategies during tow sports, the fallen skier or rider should always raise their arms above their head or hold the ski or board high above the water to be more visible to other boaters in the vicinity.



PHOTOS: (FROM TOP) MYK CRAWFORD / ADOBE STOCK, JACOB LUND / ADOBE STOCK

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REMEMBER to always observe all applicable boating laws. Never drink and drive. Dress properly with a USCG-approved personal floatation device and protective gear. © 2023 Yamaha Motor Corporation, U.S.A. All rights reserved. 1-866-894-1626

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Q&A

By
Michael "Mick"
Hannock

RACK 'EM
Swiveling board racks, such as this one, make carrying gear secure and worry-free for watersports enthusiast boaters.

CAMP SHOWER
5 GALLONS / 20 LITERS

SHOWER TIME

Q: Dear Boat Doctor, we'd like to try overnight camping aboard our bowrider. We were wondering if installing a freshwater shower is within the realm of handy DIY boaters? We have done many home projects, but boating is new to us.

Pat and Jean McKinnon
Sandusky, Ohio

A: You can probably install a freshwater shower aboard your boat, given your home-project experience. You'll need to install a tank, pump, and hose bib, and run the plumbing and electrical. If your address is an indication, you boat in fresh water, so you actually might want only raw-water washdown, in which case, you don't need a tank, but you do need to install a through-hull fitting as a lake-water intake. Read this relevant article at boatingmag.com/how-to/installing-cockpit-shower.

I will just add that some occasional boat campers simply use one of the many "sun showers" available in RV and camping stores. I also know that Editor-in-Chief Kevin Falvey uses a garden sprayer, painted black so that sunlight warms the water, for showering when camping aboard his open boat.

INFLATION

Q: Dear Doc, how hard is it to install an air pump aboard my boat? I'd use it for inflating tow tubes.

Stephen Mills
Oakland, California

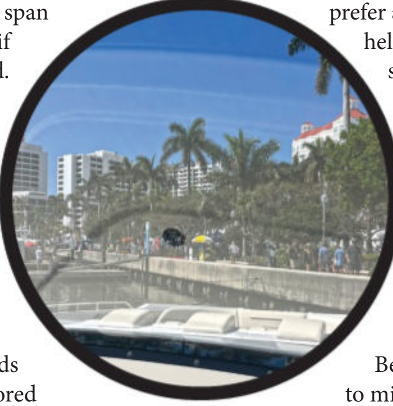
A: Installing an inflation pump is within the reach of a DIY boater. An inflator will also deflate tubes, which makes carrying them on board easier. Fenders and buoys are other things for which you might use an inflator. There is a comprehensive article at boatingmag.com/how-to/installing-an-atmos-air-station.

GLARE

NAUTICAL
NO-NO

You can see that the glare in this windshield (pictured below) obscures the view. Depending on the height of the sun and the direction of travel, windshield glare can span from annoying to dangerous, if the view is completely blocked.

Most of what we call glare is light reflected off the helm area underneath the windshield. In a car, most glare comes from outside light reflecting off buildings and such. There's nothing around the outside of a boat on the water. Ever notice that most car dashboards are dark? A light or white-colored helm reflects the most light, and thus creates the most glare.



This is why we generally prefer a dark-colored helm area: The dark surface absorbs more light, reflects less, and thus minimizes glare.

Many boaters will simply place a colored towel or mat atop a white helm to kill glare. Some will go as far as paint the helm top, though nowadays, using EVA foam deck material, such as SeaDek, is popular. Be aware of glare and take steps to mitigate it. *—Kevin Falvey*

PHOTOS: (FROM TOP) TOM KING, COURTESY SIRIUS SURVIVAL, KEVIN FALVEY

SIMMS PRODRY RAIN SUIT

This year's rainy spring fishing season let me put Simms' ProDry rain suit to a serious on-water test, and I am happy to report that the bibs-and-jacket combo lived up to the promise of keeping me dry and comfortable.

When it comes to the jacket, this is thanks to the Gore-Tex Pro shell 70-denier construction bolstered by 80-denier in high-wear areas. The three-way-adjustable hood kept my head dry while letting me maintain peripheral vision. The articulated sleeves offered plenty of room inside for extra layers of warm clothing, and the cuffs cinch down nicely to keep out water. Zippered pockets let me store small items while also allowing for quick access.

The Simms' ProDry bibs also boast Gore-Tex waterproof yet breathable construction. I like the full-length center-front zipper that eases putting on and taking off the bibs. Adjustable suspenders let me create just the right fit. Dual hand-warmer pockets, a zippered stretch-woven chest pocket and an interior stretch-woven pocket let me stow plenty of knickknacks. Thigh-high zippered cuffs helped the legs fit easily over insulating layers and boots, and a belt loop allowed me to add a belt for my waist.

The ProDry rain suit is light enough to roll up and stow compactly in a dry locker or a cabin, so you can don it quickly when downpours threaten. Both items are available in men's sizes XS through XXXL in black and driftwood brown. $699.95 for each; simmfishing.com —*Jim Hendricks*

WE
TEST
STUFF

TOWED

Q: Dear Boat Doc, can we safely tow a tube from a stern cleat on our outboard-powered boat?

Marc Rubin
Greenwood Lake, New York

A: If the cleat is securely bolted in place—preferably with fender washers and/or a backing plate—yes, you can. Personally, I prefer to tie up, or buy, a bridle that attaches to the cleats or transom rings on either side of the transom. The towline then gets tied (loop to loop) to the center of the bridle. This puts the strain on two boat fixtures instead of one, and centers the force of the pull so that there is less effect on the boat's steering.

MIX PAINTS

Q: I have a question about bottom paint. After using the same paint for over 20 years, I switched brands this year due to a big sale. It is the same type of paint—an ablative. I have a half-can of the other paint left over. Can I mix the two paints? I used to always add the leftover same-brand paint to the new paint. Or should I just buy more of the one brand?

John Wisch
Annapolis, Maryland

A: Antifouling paints are basically a cocktail of chemicals. Mixing two brands risks the paint failing midseason due to some unforeseen incompatibility. Then, where would your savings be?

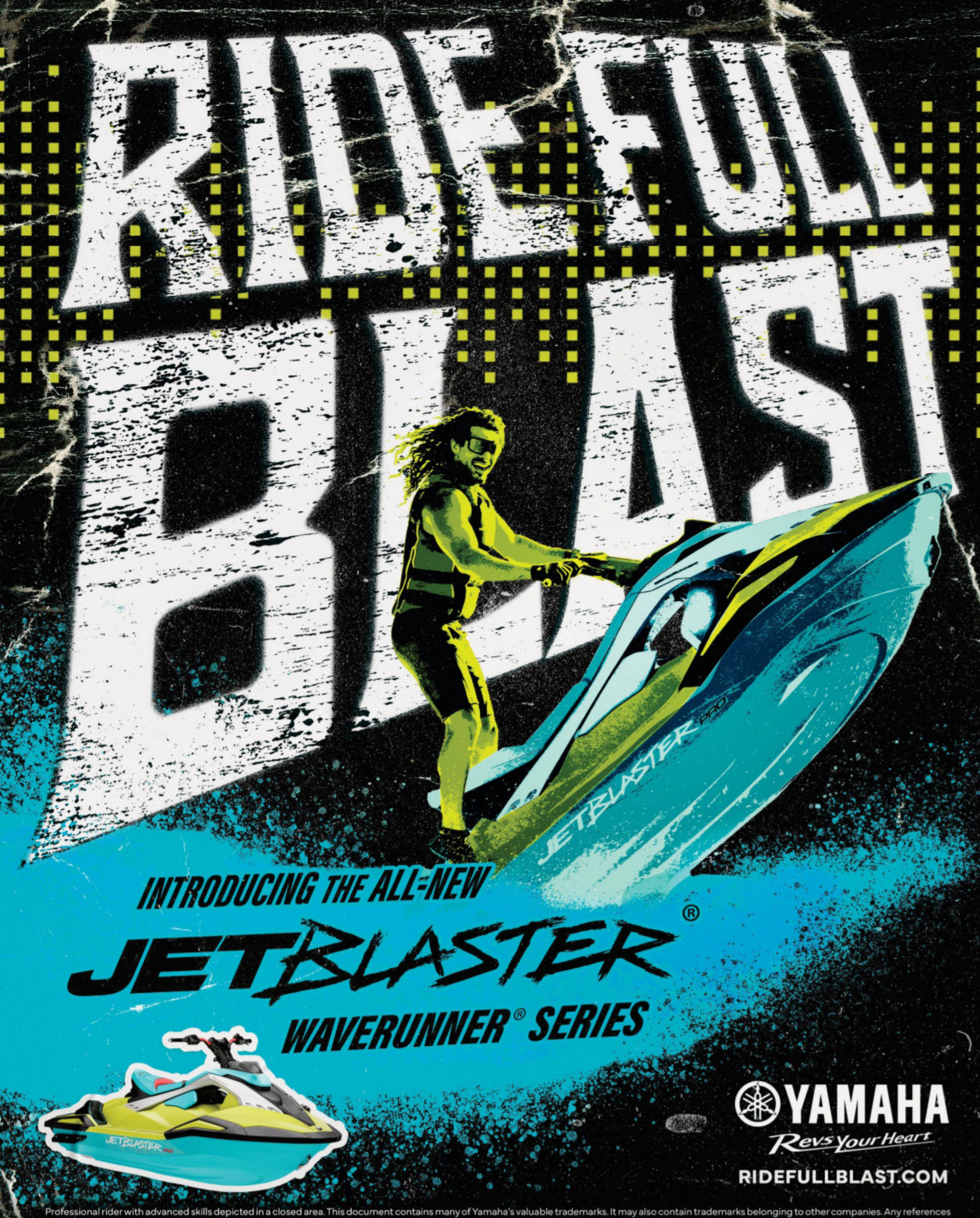
There is a way to not waste that paint. You could apply each paint to different areas of the boat. Because painting over cured paint is different from mixing unapplied paint, next year you can overcoat with one paint that's compatible for overcoating both.

ASK THE DOCTOR
Send questions to Mick with your name and boating location to boatdr@boatingmag.com.

PHOTOS: COURTESY SIMMS FISHING PRODUCTS

Rx

USE A LAWN SPRINKLER TO RINSE YOUR BOAT TRAILER It can require the contortionist skills of a Cirque du Soleil performer to rinse the entire boat-trailer frame, axles, springs, wheels, brakes and other metal parts using a garden hose once your boat is sitting on top of the trailer. Yet, rinse it you must after each saltwater outing if you expect a long service life from your boat trailer. To make rinsing easier and more effective, use a simple lawn sprinkler on your garden hose instead of spray nozzle. I like to use the lawn sprinkler in conjunction with an applicator that sprays a de-salting solution such as CRC Salt Terminator, Salt Away or Star brite Salt Off. Position the sprinkler under the boat, turn it on full blast, and move it at 2- to 3-minute intervals to ensure that you thoroughly rinse the entire trailer. With the de-salting solution, you're also washing away salt from the bottom of the hull, through-hull fittings and transducers. —*JH*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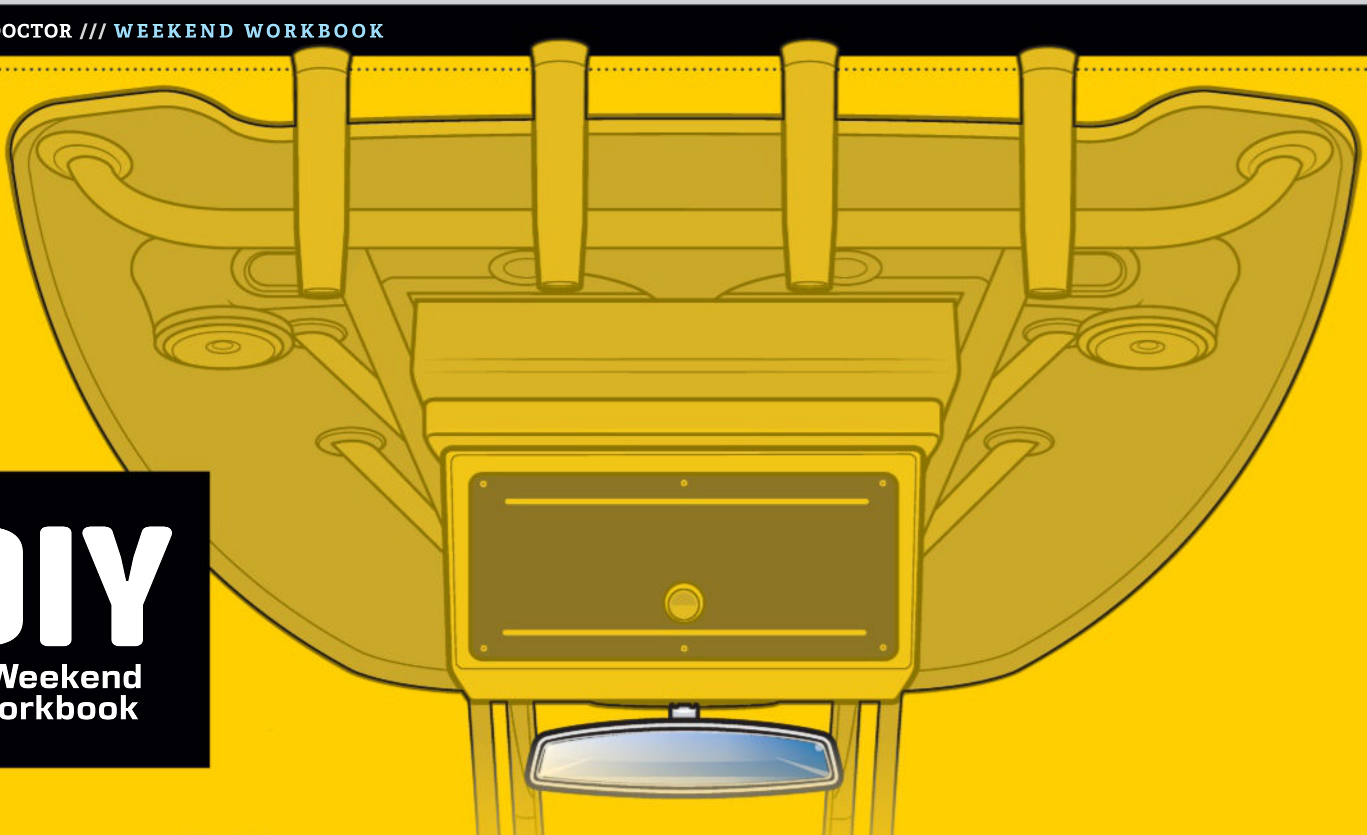


DIY
+ Weekend Workbook

CENTER-CONSOLE WATERSPORTS MIRROR

Many center-consoles now include ski-tow pylons, so adding a watersports mirror is also a good idea.

Today's new center-consoles have evolved into much more than just fishing boats. These popular models increasingly come with all kinds of family-oriented amenities, including optional or standard ski pylons, tow bars, and other secure tow-rope attachment points for watersports such as water-skiing, tubing, wakesurfing, and more. A prime example is the Sea Pro 225FLX Sandbar Boat that we featured in the April 2025 issue.

On the other hand, watersports rearview mirrors seem as rare as hen's teeth on most center-consoles. That's a shortcoming in our view, because when used in conjunction with an aft-facing crewmember to serve as a spotter, a wide-angle watersports mirror allows the helmsman to keep eyes forward while also monitoring the riders and other elements astern to boost situational awareness and safety.

A watersports mirror can prove helpful in other endeavors as well. While fishing, for example, you can keep an eye on anglers in the aft cockpit, as well as boat traffic approaching from astern. There are not a great many watersports mirrors designed for CCs, but one standout is the PTM Watersports Edge VX-140 center-console mirror.

It is quality-built from powder-coated billet-aluminum construction and a prescription-grade mirror measuring 20 inches wide by 4.5 inches tall to provide a 140-degree viewing range. Here's how to add one.
—Jim Hendricks

SKILL LEVEL

1 OF 5

FINISH TIME

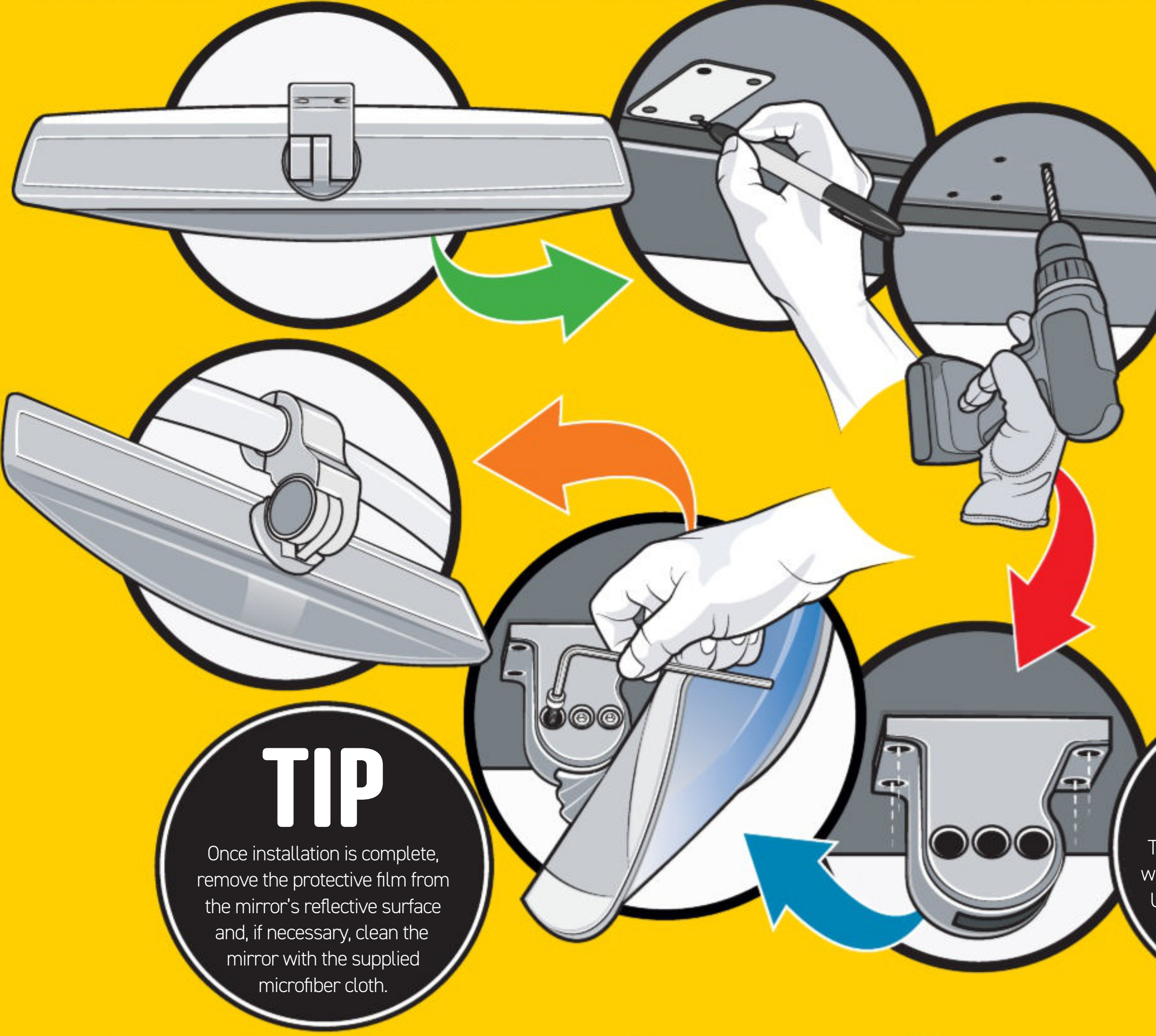
Approx. 1 hour

TOOLS AND SUPPLIES

- PTM Edge VX-140 center-console mirror ($431.99; anchorexpress.com)
- VX-140 2-inch spacer, if needed, to lower mirror ($120.86; ptmwatersports.com)
- Marking pen
- Power drill and bits
- Allen wrench set
- Box/open-end wrench set

TIP If you need the mirror a bit lower for a better view, PTM offers a 2-inch spacer for the surface-mounted VX-140. This spacer is machined billet aluminum and powder-coated white or black for corrosion protection.

ILLUSTRATIONS: JIM HATCH. PHOTO: COURTESY PMT



TIP

Once installation is complete, remove the protective film from the mirror's reflective surface and, if necessary, clean the mirror with the supplied microfiber cloth.

TIP

The kit for the VX-140 comes with a packet of thread locker. Use this when fastening the supplied bolts and nuts for the bracket.

+ PONTOON MIRROR

Pontoon boats represent another growing category in which many models have tow bars for watersports. For pontooners, PTM offers the PCX-20 Pro pontoon mirror system, which clamps to the rail just forward of the helm. With a 14 inch wide by 6 inch prescription-grade mirror, its aircraft-quality aluminum assembly fits up to ⅞-inch square pontoons rails.

MOUNTING CHOICES Like a car's rearview mirror, the VX-140 center-console mirror is designed for mounting overhead and slightly forward to prevent obstruction of forward visibility. PTM offers two mounting choices—a 1.315-inch tube mount (for the pipework of a T-top above the helm) and a flat-surface mount (for a location such as the underside of an overhead electronics box). Choose which works best for your boat, and then purchase the appropriate version of the VX-140. You can also choose either powder-coated white or black for the housing and bracket to best match your boat's decor.

MARK THE MOUNTING HOLES With a surface-mounted mirror, choose an overhead spot that works best for you while at the wheel. This will vary by boat, but a common location is along the centerline of the underside of an overhead electronics box. Ensure it's far enough forward that you don't risk banging your head, while also offering a clear view astern. Check for clearance to drill through and install the four mounting bolts. Use the supplied backing plate (with the longest dimension of the plate aligned fore and aft) as a template to mark the four holes, then drill them out with a power drill and a 5⁄16-inch bit.

INSTALL THE BRACKET The surface-mounted bracket for the VX-140 rearview mirror is easier to install if you detach it from the mirror itself. Use an Allen wrench to remove the three retaining bolts and pressure plates. Have a buddy help you at this point. Apply the supplied peel-and-stick gasket to the mating surface of the mounting bracket. Align the bracket with the four mounting holes on the underside of the electronics box, and place the backing plate inside the electronics box. Then use the supplied ¼-inch stainless-steel hardware to secure the bracket. Tighten the hardware.

REASSEMBLE THE MIRROR With the bracket secured, reassemble the mirror to the mounting bracket using the three Allen bolts and pressure plates that you removed earlier. Again, have a buddy hold the mirror in place so that it does not fall and become damaged while lining up and threading the bolts. Before completely tightening the bolts, make sure the mirror is well-positioned to provide you with the best possible view astern. This is accomplished by getting the bolts semi-tight so that you can still move the mirror up and down. Once the mirror angle is right, tighten the bolts all the way.

INSTALL THE TUBE MOUNT With the tube-mounted version of the PTM Edge VX-140 center-console blade mirror, there's no drilling necessary. Position the clamp in the center of the T-top pipe running horizontally above the helm area. The clamp offers the ability to rotate the mirror so that you can position it forward or aft slightly to accommodate the helmsman and your particular center-console boat. Once you're satisfied, tighten the bolts for the clamp. Slightly loosen the three bolts on the pressure plates behind the mirror to adjust the viewing angle to your liking, then retighten them.

ILLUSTRATIONS: JIM HATCH; PHOTO: COURTESY PMT

INBOARD-ENGINE MAINTENANCE

Use these midseason tips to keep your marine engine running right.

Your tow-sports inboard—or any inboard—requires regular maintenance if it is to deliver long life and good performance. Seasoned boat owners know to make recurring assessments part of their routine. Here are several excellent midseason checkups you should make on your inboard-powered boat's engine and driveline. In all cases, adhere to the engine-maker's recommendations for maintenance. These are mandatory, not suggestions.

One tip to get started, if you haven't done so already, is to write down the make and part numbers of belts, filters, fluids, and other service points so that you have these at the ready for future needs. Now, put these other tips into practice. —*Rick Shackleton*

TRANSMISSION (MARINE GEAR) Check the transmission—more accurately called the marine gear—fluid level with the boat on the level or in the water. First, run the engine for 5 minutes, shifting gears a few times. Next, pull the dipstick and check the fluid level. Also look for signs of discoloration, particles or a burnt smell. If you discover any of these, there is a problem; now is the time to call in a professional marine technician. By doing so, you might avoid dealing with a catastrophic problem. Check the filter too.

BELTS Feel for tension. A rule of thumb is that a belt shouldn't deflect more than a half-inch when you depress it with your finger between the pulleys. Also, get out a straightedge to make sure the belts are running parallel to the pulleys they are on. Look for obvious signs of wear and slippage, and listen for squealing or singing sounds. All of these mean the belt needs either adjustment or replacement. Go out and buy a spare belt to keep aboard the boat, along with the tools to change it.

FILTERS (AIR FILTER/SPARK ARRESTER) To maintain a marine spark arrester (also known as a backfire flame arrester), inspect it for physical damage such as holes, tears or a poor fit. Replace it if you find any of these. Usually, you'll simply remove any debris, clean it with a mild solvent or soap and water, and ensure that it's completely dry before reinstalling. I like to blow-dry and clean it with compressed air. If it's really dirty, or you haven't cleaned it in more than a year, a commercial cleaner or brake cleaner can be used. If you go that route, wear a respirator, gloves, eye protection and other PPE.

HOSES Check hoses on a cool engine. Hoses should be firm and not collapse easily, or even at all, when you squeeze them. If they collapse, replace them. Hoses should be securely clamped and able to withstand a solid tug on your part. Hose clamps should be tight, corrosion-free and mechanically sound. For engine intakes, and intakes for ballast, make sure that you know where the seacocks (shutoff valves) are located. Operate (aka exercise) the valve levers to make sure that they work.

PROP Visually inspect the propeller for dings and bent blades. Subtler damage can be seen by holding a straightedge vertically ahead of the prop and against the hull. Turn the prop by hand (key off, kill cord removed or spark plug wires removed), paying attention to the distance between the straightedge and each blade. All three, or four, blades should pass the straightedge at the same distance. If they do not, your prop is unbalanced. Send out a damaged prop for reconditioning. Even minor damage can damage your drivetrain, when you consider that a prop turns thousands of times per minute. This is the time to try that different prop you have been thinking of, and it is also a good reason to own a spare propeller.

PHOTOS: (CLOCKWISE FROM TOP) COURTESY PLEASURECRAFT MARINE, KEVIN FALVEY (2), COURTESY ILMOR MARINE

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Super Blast Marine
Marine/Sport
HORN
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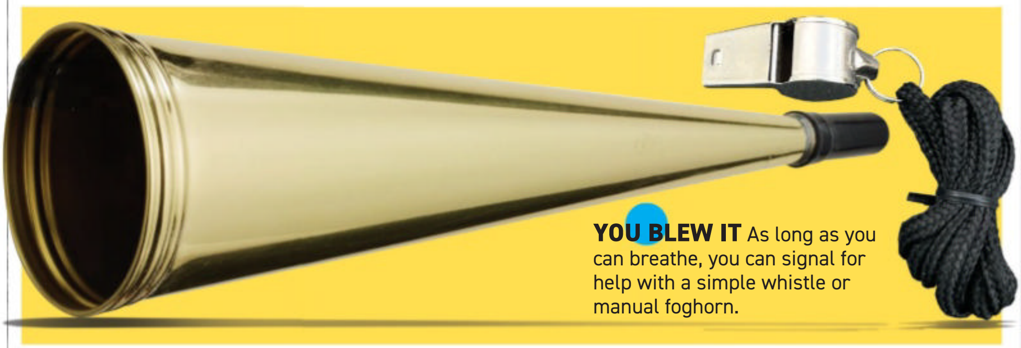
KLAXON
CAUTION
ATTENTION

SOUND-SIGNALING DEVICES

When it comes to staying safe on the water, we have so many tools at our disposal—from flares and spotlights to AIS, radar and satellite messaging devices—that it's easy to overlook one vital tool: sound. When it's foggy or you're boating at night, signaling by sound is a key way to alert other boats in the area to your presence, both for collision avoidance and to signal for help if needed. Here's a quick rundown of some sound-signaling devices you can use on board. *—Pete McDonald*

AIR HORN The US Coast Guard requires that every boat carry a sound-signaling device capable of being heard for 1 nautical mile. This is often a portable air horn. If you find yourself in need of assistance, blow three short (1 second) blasts followed by three long (6 seconds) ones, then three shorts again—indicating an SOS situation. West Marine sells the MaxPro Super Blast Marine Horn in 3.5- and 8-ounce cans that meet the USCG requirements for vessels up to 65 feet in length overall. Opt for the larger 8-ounce can capable of 119-decibel blasts, and keep a few refills aboard. $16.99; westmarine.com

MOUNTED HORN An installed electric or air horn provides another way to signal by sound on the water. You can use it to signal distress (using the same SOS blast pattern) or to signal your location and direction to other boats in times of limited visibility. For instance, you can use one short blast to indicate you intend to pass another vessel to starboard or two short blasts to pass to port. Three short blasts indicates moving in reverse. A prolonged blast can indicate someone is backing out of a slip or approaching a bend in a channel. (For a complete list of nautical sound signals, visit navcen.uscg.gov.) Many new boats come with a horn mounted, but if you don't already have one, West Marine sells a symphony of horns such as the Marinco 24V Trumpet Horn. Made from 304-grade stainless steel, it produces a 118-decibel blast and draws 2.5 amps at 24 volts. $119.99, westmarine.com



YOU BLEW IT As long as you can breathe, you can signal for help with a simple whistle or manual foghorn.

MANUAL FOGHORN If you've lost power or operate a small boat where you can't install a fixed electric horn, a handheld manual foghorn is a good sound-signaling device to have aboard. Like the whistle, it relies only on your lung capacity. While it won't carry as far as an electric horn or an air horn that uses chemical propellant, you can use a handheld manual horn to alert other boaters in your area. Look for one that meets ABYC Standard A-23 and can hold up in a marine environment, such as the Perko manual foghorn. $39.95; perko.com

BELL Boats between 39.5 and 65.6 feet in length are required to mount or carry a bell. When you hear a bell rung in rapid succession for 5 seconds, it indicates that a nearby boat is at anchor. That signal should be repeated at 1-minute intervals. While typically used at anchorages, it can also be used to signal to other boats that you are nearby when no other sound-signaling devices are at hand. Look for a sturdy mountable bell made of brass and with a stout lanyard such as the Weems & Plath 7-inch bell. $220.99; westmarine.com

WHISTLE A whistle is the easiest and least-expensive sound-signaling device to include in your safety kit, and requires only lung capacity to use. Look for a whistle capable of producing a 100-decibel blast that can carry over a half-mile and has a lanyard so that you can throw it around your neck and use it in an overboard situation. Blowing it loudly and often will attract attention. You also can use a manual whistle to send out the SOS signal. A plastic one such as the ACR WW-3 Res-Q Whistle won't be subject to corrosion. $8.99; westmarine.com

PHOTOS: (CLOCKWISE FROM TOP) COURTESY ULINE.COM, COURTESY WEEMS & PLATH, COURTESY DEPOFIT, COURTESY TOPLICHT, KEVIN FALVEY

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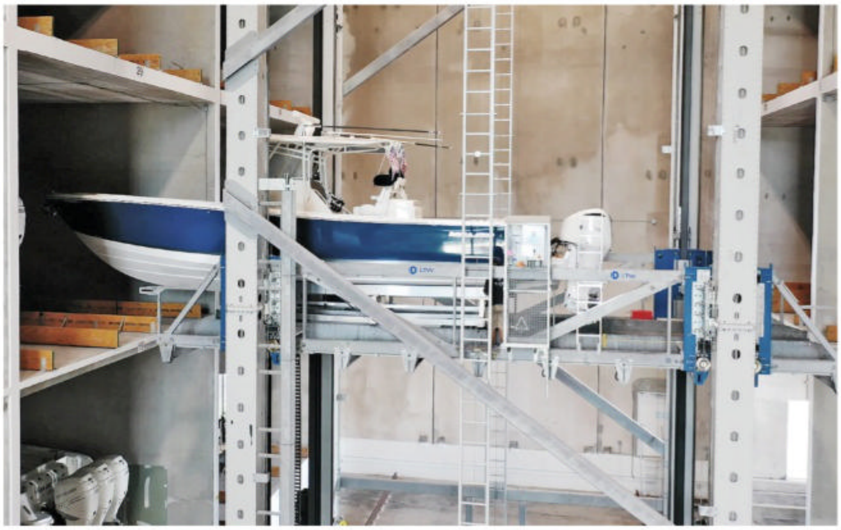
ROBO MARINA

Gulf Star automated dry stack marina

A new robotic dry stack marina could be in your future. At Gulf Star Marina in Fort Myers Beach, Florida, it's here now.



DRY STACK storage just went robotic at Gulf Star Marina in Fort Myers Beach, Florida. The automated crane travels between facing concrete cubicles to select boats for launch and, like a NASA rocket gantry, travels to the launch conveyor to gently place the vessel for launch.

The five-story concrete building accommodates up to 115 vessels in concrete cubicles of varying beam and height, 80 feet deep, which can nest vessels of dimensions to 40 feet in length overall. The building is rated for winds to 200 mph to keep your boat safe in dangerous weather, and the concrete-cubicle design protects your boat from dirt, grime and grease falling from boats stored overhead.

The twist that makes it even better is that the crane is fully automated. Its electric motors are unobtrusively quiet and prevent one of the biggest vessel foulers in dry-stack operations: the particulate matter of a forklift's diesel exhaust. The relative silence of the electric crane and trolley is a blessing to a private residence on one side and a popular dining franchise called Doc Ford's on the other.

Inside, the building looks a little like a pair of *Hollywood Squares* stages facing each other, with a rail-based crane that moves between them, plucking boats from cubicles on either side. They do it with a sledlike lift that slides into the cubicle and under the boat's cradle, and then electric jacks lift the boat and cradle, and pull it back to the crane platform to be lowered to an electric launch conveyor. The final splash sequence is directed by the lift manager operating a remote control. The boat is lowered into the water and then driven by a captain to one of many slips. When the dockmaster returns the empty cradle to the crane's pickup station, the crane plucks it up and slips it into the first available cubicle. From cubical to launch, the conveyor needs about seven minutes. There are two launch conveyors, allowing the crane to pick up a second vessel while the first is being launched.

The crane and dockmasters work together to launch and land boats while the crane memorizes space available in the building and, after a scanner measures the boat, it selects the first and best available cubicle for storage. It logs the location to the cloud-based system so that it can quickly retrieve the boat when needed.

The boater initializes this whole process through Boat Cloud, an app-based system that allows the boater to select the day and time of launch and, using drop-down menus, request fuel and victuals be onboarded upon launch. The marina manager can allow the crane to run automatically or control its launch and landing sequences by computer, depending on the number and timing of launches.

While all that is impressive enough, the marina's environment is also pleasant and inviting. A chandlery boasts accessories such as safety gear and Yeti coolers, as well as inflatable toys. Motor flushing and rinse is part of the storage process, and boat detailers are available via the app. Service bays allow mobile mechanics to work on boats without needing to remove them from the premises.

A lounge is open to members, as are private showers and restrooms. At the end of the day, boaters can toss the keys to the dockmaster, then shower, change, and head over to Doc Ford's for dinner and cocktails. A tap of the app restarts the process for the next boating adventure. —*Randy Vance*

GULF STAR MARINA

GULF STAR'S marina is inviting and provides ample docking (recently expanded) for daily customer operations. Showers, a chandlery and its convenient location add to its popularity.

PHOTOS: COURTESY GULF STAR MARINA

MOOMBA® BOATS
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Check out the ALL NEW Moomba Max at Moomba.com
Live No Worries

By Randy Vance

MIDSEASON BUFF-OUT

Independence Day is past, but boaters are still active for at least another eight weeks. If you've had a great season so far, chances are that the spit and polish you put on your boat's gelcoat finish this past spring is losing some its luster. Boating Lab has tested many of the best surface finishes for your boat, and here are our favorites, along with our recommendations of best applications for you.

PERFECT PREPARATION FOR A PERFECT SHINE

To achieve a good result with graphene, ceramic or wax, perfect surface preparation is essential. Surface flaws and oxidation in gelcoat will be amplified by these coatings. Especially with graphene, fine scratches and scrapes will jump out at you. Wash the boat with a degreasing detergent such as dish soap. Boat soaps are fine, but only if they are formulated without any polymer wax, and most of them are not. Polishing with compounds is essential, and once that is done, wipe the surface with denatured alcohol to remove any residual petroleum, wax or polish. Carefully executing these steps will promote even coverage and a deep, glossy shine.

303

GRAPHENE NANO SPRAY COATING

Graphene is formally graphene oxide mechanically and chemically separated from graphite, yielding translucent molecular plates. The electrons of those plates are charged in such a way that they are attracted to and attach to one another. When suspended in ceramic (which is silicon dioxide), they align and bond to one another on the hull's surface in a tenacious honeycomb quilt that stops UV light, dissipates heat, sheds water, and protects hulls with a brilliant shine.

My boat hull's gelcoat finish has remained glossy and free of oxidation 18 months after treatment. Even the manufacturer was surprised by that.

HOW WE DID IT: To get that result, we executed a three-stage polishing regimen with a power buffer, progressing from coarse to medium to fine grit. When we were finished, the unprotected gelcoat had a mirrorlike finish. Graphene oxide is unforgiving of anything less.

The 303 Graphene Nano Coating has to be laid down in a thin layer that allows the graphene plates to align and bind over the surface in an armorlike layer. Because 303 Graphene is packaged in a spray bottle, it's tempting to spray it on and wipe it off. Don't. Instead, spray it on a fine-napped foam-backed microfiber pad. We used one from 303 that was about twice the size and thickness of a bar of soap. Wipe it on the hull in cross-hatch motions, back and forth, up and down, and move on to the next section. Done correctly, the moist film will be barely visible. Let it dry just a few minutes, then wipe it off. Work in small patches for a mirrorlike finish that amplifies the quality of the surface below it. The company suggests using 303 Graphene Detailer ($16.99) combined with frequent washings with wax-free boat soap to maintain a gleaming finish.

BEST FOR: The 303 Graphene boasts a one-year efficacy, but in spite of my long-lasting results, applying it long before the 12-month mark will be far less work. If you meticulously care for your boat, washing it frequently and compounding it annually to remove all oxidation, you'll have the foundation for a top-shelf result that will shine all season. A power buffer is essential to this work, as is a patient eye and a strong arm.

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Exceeding Expectations Since 1980
BEYOND CERAMIC!
GRAPHENE
NANO SPRAY COATING™
NEXT-LEVEL CARBON POLYMER PROTECTION
REDUCES WATER SPOTTING
SAFE TO USE IN SUN
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PHOTO: RANDY VANCE

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GTECHNIQ

RINSE-ON CERAMIC

Gtechniq's Rinse-On Ceramic Coating ($29.95) is easy to use, providing three months of protection—enough for most North American boaters' main season—and it's easy to renew midseason for more longevity. It still, however, requires the same flawless surface preparation as graphene for best results. For a more durable ceramic coating, Fast Coat ($39.95) is available for DIY as well, and it is included in Gtechniq's Marine Aftercare Kit ($124.95). Fast Coat can be applied in the same manner as graphene.

HOW WE DID IT: We used Gtechniq's UV Wash, a high-sudsing detergent with an ultraviolet protectant formulated to assist the ceramic bond on the boat's finish. We mixed a few ounces in a couple of gallons of water, washed it on, and rinsed it off. Gtechniq offers a Multi-Stage Polish ($37.95; 16 ounces) compound that begins as a coarse grit but breaks down into successively smaller grit during the polishing process. It's simple and proved effective in our test with a power buffer. Polishing by hand is far too arduous. When washing and buffing, pay special attention to the transom area, where engine exhaust is apt to "station wagon" and foul the transom. Gtechniq's Panel Wipe is an alcohol-based compound which ensures that petroleum, organic wax or polish residue is removed from the hull's surface. Wipe it onto the surface until it slides smoothly across the application area. Follow up by wiping down with a dry, clean microfiber towel to be sure that all residue is removed from the boat's finish.

After all this, the hull is ready for the Rinse-On Ceramic Coating. Attach a hose to the included spray applicator, set the application rate to 50 percent, and spray it on. Continue until the water begins to bead up, indicating that the ceramic is bonding to the gelcoat. It might take two or three passes to achieve the water-beading effect, but when you get it, you're done.

BEST FOR: Ceramic coatings are slightly more forgiving than graphene, in that they won't tint the finish if improperly applied. Though they provide ample UV protection, their clarity will reveal remaining oxidation—even amplify it in some cases and allow it to continue beneath the surface. The good news is, once properly applied, frequent reapplication after washing is easy and will take only a few minutes to maintain the shine.

GTECHNIQ MARINE
WATER SPOT REMOVER
RUST STAIN REMOVER
GLASS CLEANER
CITRUS ALL PURPOSE CLEANER
CERAMIC FAST COAT
INTERIOR CLEANER
UV WASH

PHOTOS: (FROM TOP) HEDGEHOG94/ ADOBE STOCK, COURTESY GTECHNIQ

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MEGUIAR'S

PREMIUM MARINE WAX

30.17; 32 OZ./AMAZON.COM

This compound promises protection from UV damage and enriches the color and shine. It is advertised to remove light oxidation, and it will do so nicely. However, the product description suggests using the wax only after the surface has been cleaned and restored to a "like new" or "average" finish, so if your boat has been neglected, it is better to follow the preparations used either for graphene or ceramic. Regardless, this marine wax will remove light oxidation, particularly when used with a power buffer, and is more forgiving on less-than-perfect surfaces. It has a clean, pine-like aroma rather than the petroleum smell associated with other waxes.

FLAGSHIP
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Since 1901
M63
PREMIUM
Marine Wax
Long-lasting, durable protection
Dramatically enriches color & shine
Protects surfaces from UV damage
16 FL OZ (1 PT) 473 mL
WARNING. MAY IRRITATE NOSE AND THROAT.
Read carefully other cautions on the back panel.

Star brite
NON-SKID DECK CLEANER
• Lifts dirt from non-skid deck surfaces
• Leaves a non-slippery, protective polymer coating
PTEF
CAUTION: IRRITANT. SEE BACK.
Net 22 US fl oz (650 ml)
85922A1V6

STAR BRITE

DECK CLEANER WITH PTEF

$13.32; 32 OZ./WALMART.COM

Star brite Deck Cleaner with PTEF is a regular part of our boat-maintenance regimen. It works well on both diamond nonskid and grit-style nonskid. In our tests, its detergentlike character has removed cola, food and fish guts. It wasn't so effective on wine stains, so drink that dockside. In addition, it leaves a finish on the deck that reduces future staining. Wash the boat and deck first using a detergent, then finish up by squirting it directly to the nonskid surface, spread it with a boat brush, let stand, scrub, then rinse. For extra protection, squirt on another treatment and let it dry. Doing that will leave a more-stain-repellent finish for the next outing.

PHOTOS: (FROM LEFT) COURTESY MEGUIAR'S, COURTESY STAR BRITE

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SCAN ME

To see a photo gallery of the Mystic M5200XL, scan this tag or visit boatingmag.com/3446.

Punch the throttles at the helm of the Mystic M5200XL, and the acceleration feels so smooth and effortless that you don't realize how quickly you're gaining speed or even how fast you're actually going. That is, until you glance to one side and notice the houses and channel markers along the waterway start to blur. Then you feel like a pilot flying a private jet on a bluebird day, experiencing nothing but pure speed in a luxury setting.

Founded in 1996 by John Cosker, Mystic has had a hand in both the offshore-racing and recreational-boating sectors since that time. On the rec side, Mystic has gained a reputation for building opulent speedsters, which is fully evident when you step aboard the M5200XL.

PHOTO: COURTESY MYSTIC POWERBOATS

#3446

BOATING
CERTIFIED
TEST

MYSTIC POWERBOATS M5200XL

The M5200XL is a mesmerizing combination of performance and luxury that can entertain a crew at full speed and overnight in style.

PHOTOS: COURTESY MYSTIC POWERBOATS

The boat is highly customizable, so no two are exactly alike, but our test model had a total of eight helm-style seats—two rows of four—under the hardtop, each with its own flip-up bolster, so everyone can adjust independently to their own comfort level. Step aft to the transom for a wraparound lounge featuring an electrically actuated teak table that can be converted to a sun pad with the add-on cushions. Just aft of the helm stadium seating, there's a summer kitchen with a sink, grill, and a cooler that slides in and out at the push of a button.

Coaming bolsters adorn the inwales from stem to stern, and the wide walkways to either side of the console provide easy passage to the spacious bow lounge. With 40 inches of freeboard, moving around this boat feels safe and secure. Just forward of the console, Mystic installed three forward-facing lounges with their own cup holders and armrests. The wraparound seating in the bow is ergonomically designed for comfort. Two electrically actuated tables can be deployed to rise from the deck and create another social space. Our tester

PHOTO: COURTESY MYSTIC POWERBOATS

had a Garmin display, synced to the helm, flush-mounted into the bow, so passengers can keep tabs on where the captain is going.

Step belowdecks into a cabin with 6 feet, 4 inches of headroom and a V-berth that converts to a dinette. The head has a vanity with a mounted bowl sink, as well as a VacuFlush toilet—all separated from the shower by a full-length glass door. Our test boat had the summer kitchen in the main cockpit rather than a galley belowdecks, but owners can add one below if desired. Crank up the air conditioning on a hot summer night to sleep or hang out in climate-controlled comfort. All of it adds up to a boat that's more than capable of meeting your needs for an overnight cruise.

But if you're interested in the Mystic M5200, No. 1 on your checklist is going to be how this boat performs, and on our test day, it came up aces. With four Mercury 600 Verado V-12s on the transom, this 13-ton boat climbed onto plane in an astounding 3.1 seconds and hit the 30 mph mark in just 7.5 seconds en route to a near 80 mph top end. What's more, our running angle never climbed over 2 degrees on our clinometer, confirming what we already knew—the boat did not squat or hesitate coming out of the hole. That's important when commanding a boat of this size and speed, so you can always keep your eyes connected to what's happening on the water in front of you. The double-stepped hull ran with a level attitude and felt predictable throughout the speed range.

> When the boat reaches 20 mph in speed, wind dams on the walkways to the bow automatically deploy from the sides of the console, protecting the crew in the cockpit.

Handling proved as smooth as silk during hard-over turns at 30 mph, and our view of the water and surrounding area was never compromised. The tall wraparound windshield kept us protected from the wind at speed, and the twin flush-mounted 27-inch Garmin displays were easy to read from behind the wheel. Our test boat also featured Garmin's Surround View, providing a 360-degree video feed of the entire boat. All of that gives the captain an extra level of awareness while operating at high speeds. Mystic prerigs its M5200s for a Seakeeper 6 gyrostabilizer—80 percent of its customers opt for one—but it's such a wide, stable boat that it handles well in a beam sea without a gyro.

There aren't many builders making performance-based 50-footers, but another luxurious choice to consider is the Formula 500 Super Sport Crossover, which lists for $3,625,520 with the same quad Mercury 600 Verado package. Nor-Tech also offers a 500 Sport that lists for $2,100,000 (starting price).

While every Mystic is highly customizable, our test boat had some cool added features that are worth pointing out. The electric sliding hardtop lets you bathe the cockpit in natural light and get some natural ventilation on the right day. There's also an electric sunshade that can be deployed from the hardtop to cover the cockpit aft of the hardtop, and a canvas sunshade that can cover the bow lounge. The extended swim platform helps with boarding at the dock or taking a swim while anchored near the sandbar.

After spending the day running the Mystic M5200XL, doing everything from flat-out speed runs to running at idle in no-wake zones to docking it in a current using the joystick controls, there's no doubt that this boat can satisfy your need for speed while also keeping your crew safe, comfortable and entertained.
—Pete McDonald

High Points

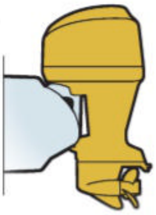
- ▶ With 40-inch gunwale height, the freeboard is securely taller than waist-high from stem to stern.
- ▶ Carbon-fiber windshield frame and hardtop shaves 300 pounds in weight compared with a fiberglass hardtop.
- ▶ Eight helm seats with independent flip-up bolsters means everyone has a plush place to stand or sit under the hardtop.

Low Point

- ▶ Bow lounge jumpseat backrest on our test boat didn't recline enough; Mystic is changing the design starting with the next build.

· **LOA:** 52'0" · **BEAM:** 14'0" · **DRAFT (MAX):** 3'7" · **DISPLACEMENT (APPROX.):** 26,500 lb. · **TRANSOM DEADRISE:** 22 degrees · **BRIDGE CLEARANCE:** 10'6" · **MAX CABIN HEADROOM:** 6'4" · **FUEL CAPACITY:** 650 gal. · **WATER CAPACITY:** 125 gal. · **MAX HORSEPOWER:** 3,600 · **AVAILABLE POWER:** Quad Mercury 600 Verados

Price: $3,020,729
(as tested)



AVAILABLE POWER:
OUTBOARD

HOW WE TESTED

ENGINES: Quad Mercury 600 Verado outboards **DRIVE/PROPS:** Outboard/Verado 12 16.5" x 37" 4-blade stainless steel (outer); Verado 12 16.5" x 37" 3-blade stainless steel (inner) **GEAR RATIO:** 2.50:1 **FUEL LOAD:** 231 gal. **WATER ON BOARD:** 0 gal. **CREW WEIGHT:** 600 lb.

MYSTIC POWERBOATS
DeLand, Florida; mysticpowerboats.com

C
BOATING
CERTIFIED
TEST
RESULTS

SPEED			EFFICIENCY					OPERATION	
rpm	knots	mph	naut. gph	stat. mpg	n. mi. mpg	s. mi. range	sound range	angle	level
1000	5.91	6.80	8.40	0.70	0.81	412	474	1	62
1500	8.34	9.60	14.30	0.58	0.67	341	393	1	62
2000	10.34	11.90	24.40	0.42	0.49	248	285	2	65
2500	17.12	19.70	29.40	0.58	0.67	341	392	2	69
3000	22.85	26.30	37.40	0.61	0.70	357	411	2	73
3500	32.85	37.80	60.10	0.55	0.63	320	368	2	76
4000	39.36	45.30	70.10	0.56	0.65	329	378	1	80
4500	42.84	49.30	83.90	0.51	0.59	299	344	1	82
5000	48.40	55.70	101.00	0.48	0.55	280	323	1	81
5500	56.48	65.00	142.00	0.40	0.46	233	268	1	84
6000	63.78	73.40	180.00	0.35	0.41	207	239	1	86
6300	67.95	78.20	196.00	0.35	0.40	203	233	1	86

MOST ECONOMICAL CRUISING SPEED

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C

BOATING CERTIFIED TEST

#3447

MASTERCRAFT
XSTAR 23

The iconic XStar gets a bottom-up redesign for the 2025 model year, and you can now order one in either 23- or 25-foot sizes.

PHOTO: GARRETT CORTESE

Since its introduction in the late ’90s, the MasterCraft XStar has left an immeasurable mark on wakeboarding, propelling the sport and its riders to unbelievable levels. For 2025, MasterCraft completely redesigned the XStar from the bottom up, but it’s now offered as a 23-footer, which we tested, and as a 25-footer. Performance, luxury, technology, fun and functionality have all been enhanced in major ways, taking the XStar to new heights.

Take a look. This XStar not only looks different from any previous iterations, but from the rest of the MasterCraft lineup as well. Gone is the signature sheerline that dipped at the hip, just aft of the tower, and in its place is a look that is both sleeker and bolder. The tower too is

SCAN ME

To see a photo gallery of the MasterCraft XStar 23, scan this tag or visit boatingmag.com/3447.

PHOTOS: GARRETT CORTESE

all-new. Dubbed the Z100, it power-folds in a matter of seconds, and it's designed to accentuate not only the exterior look of the XStar, but the interior as well, thanks to upholstered inlays. Speaking of that interior, throughout the boat, the stitching and SeaDek flooring feature a modern linear pattern that lends the XStar a vibe of its own. The seat cushions and upholstery are top-notch, providing ample comfort, while details such as built-in wireless chargers and sunglasses holders in the cubbies help elevate this boat. While previous iterations of the XStar were always known for on-water performance, this offering exudes luxury and refinement too.

For seating, the XStar has a new trick up its sleeve—or under its floor. Instead of the typical sliding rear bench, the XStar features what MasterCraft calls a "Murphy seat." Lift the floor hatch, and a bench easily pulls up into the cockpit. Keep the backrests folded down, and they act as a tabletop for food and drinks. The best seats in the house though are at the transom, and they are easily accessible thanks to a

new, cascading walk-through design. Two ultracomfy loungers sit on either side of the engine compartment and make for the perfect spot to sit back and relax.

Our test boat came with 26 total speakers: 10 cockpit speakers, four tower speakers, six transom speakers and six subs. The whole system—called MAAX for MasterCraft Aft Audio Experience—is impressive and can be individually controlled in seven separate zones, but the transom setup is unique unto itself. Simply put, audio for hanging out at the back of a boat doesn't get better.

The other best seat in the house is definitely the captain's. It offers plush cushioning and powered fore/aft and vertical movements for a customized combination of visibility and comfort. From here, you command new tech in the form of the dual displays—a 15-inch panoramic center display paired with a 12-inch touchscreen to the right. The screens feature an all-new interface that is equal parts sleek and simple. Quick menu navigation and adjustments happen with just a finger tap or two. MasterCraft went further, adding the MyDrive rotary encoder, located right next to the throttle. This allows quick adjustments on the fly to the most used systems such as surf wave or speed control, all without needing to touch a screen. Got a system or setting you're regularly accessing? Add it to the "favorites" button for the ultimate shortcut. Captains will also appreciate the ability to customize the center display and choose between the multitude of built-in cameras on the XStar: bow, tower, port stern and starboard stern.

> That's right—when in wakesurf mode, the XStar will automatically activate the camera on the side the rider is utilizing. Too cool.

When it comes to wakesurfing, the J shape that MasterCraft has long touted is more evident than ever behind the new XStar, meaning riders can get farther back and still have plenty of push. Much of this is also due to the XStar's overall displacement, which comes in at 7,600 pounds of dry weight plus 3,850 pounds of ballast. If you're wondering—and of course you are—that's an identical total displacement to Nautique's G23 Paragon. Thanks to SurfStar, the wave is easily adjusted to suit a variety of skill levels and preferences, and the display makes those adjustments even easier to navigate and understand. For wakeboarding, the wakes go from all-pro, when the ballast is full, to friendly and accommodating, which is great for beginners. Notably, the XStar delivers clean, consistent wakes, even at slower speeds (less than 20 mph), with little to no ballast, ensuring beginners a fun, approachable platform for learning to catch air.

If you're shopping the all-new XStar against others in the market, the most likely comparison is Nautique's G23 Paragon (seen advertised for $474,324 with a 630 hp PCM ZZ8 engine), which is also renowned for its luxury and wake/wave performance. Just a few inches shorter, it's also rated for 16 passengers but carries 20 fewer gallons of fuel.

The most surprising aspect of the XStar might actually be the driving performance. As wakesports boats have grown and dwarfed their water-ski predecessors over the years, handling characteristics haven't kept up. Thanks to its 6.2-liter supercharged Ilmor motor, the XStar delivers serious giddyap, and handling to boot. Throw it into a hard turn at speed, and it tracks and pivots in ways that are reminiscent of those older ski boats. More than anything though, the ample power ensures that the XStar gets on plane quickly, no matter the load or activity of the day.

The XStar was originally given its moniker as an ode to all things extreme, and wakeboarding was the new, cool "extreme" sport at the time. Now the "X" might have to stand for "extra." If you're in the market for the ultimate in luxury, styling, performance and fun, put the XStar high on your list. —*Garrett Cortese*

High Points

- ▶ Stern thruster integrated into the throttle makes maneuvering the XStar in tight quarters a breeze.
- ▶ Windshield walk-through utilizes friction hinges—no more worrying about slamming it!
- ▶ The wake and wave have to be experienced to be believed, and riders of all levels will love them.

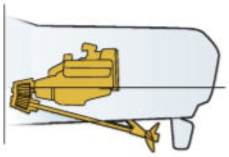
Low Point

- ▶ A Bimini top was not available at the time of testing. Without one, board storage is minimal compared with other boats.

· **LOA:** 23'7" · **BEAM:** 8'6" · **DRAFT:** 2'7" · **DISPLACEMENT:** 7,600 lb. · **TRANSOM DEADRISE:** NA · **BRIDGE CLEARANCE:** 8'1" (tower up); 4'9" (tower down) · **BALLAST:** 3,850 lb. · **FUEL CAPACITY:** 86 gal. · **MAX HORSEPOWER:** 630 · **AVAILABLE POWER:** Single Ilmor 6.2L GDI VD 2.1 supercharged

Price: $395,000
(starting, without trailer)

AVAILABLE POWER:
V-DRIVE



HOW WE TESTED

ENGINE: Ilmor Supercharged 6.2L 630 hp **DRIVE/PROP:** V-drive/Acme 18" **GEAR RATIO:** 2:1 **FUEL LOAD:** 43 gal. **CREW WEIGHT:** 700 lb.

MASTERCRAFT BOATS
Vonore, Tennessee; mastercraft.com

C

BOATING
CERTIFIED
TEST
RESULTS

SPEED			EFFICIENCY					OPERATION	
rpm	knots	mph	gph	naut. mpg	stat. mpg	n. mi. range	s. mi. range	angle	sound level
1000	4.69	5.40	1.30	3.61	4.15	276	318	2	62
1500	6.69	7.70	2.70	2.48	2.85	190	218	3	64
2000	7.82	9.00	4.60	1.70	1.96	130	150	5	71
2500	9.38	10.80	7.80	1.20	1.38	92	106	7	75
3000	13.03	15.00	11.00	1.18	1.36	91	104	10	79
3300	9.73	11.20	18.00	0.54	0.60	41	48	8	77
3500	20.25	23.30	13.90	1.46	1.68	111	128	9	81
4000	25.20	29.00	17.30	1.46	1.68	111	128	9	82
4500	28.85	33.20	21.90	1.32	1.52	101	116	7	86
5000	32.41	37.30	28.00	1.16	1.33	89	102	6	89
5500	35.19	40.50	36.00	0.98	1.13	75	86	6	88

WAKESURF SPEED: RECORDED WITH FULL BALLAST
MOST ECONOMICAL CRUISING SPEED

PHOTO: GARRETT CORTESE

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C

BOATING CERTIFIED TEST

#3448

TIGÉ ULTRÉ 23ZX

This new model from Texas-based Tigé delivers to watersports boat buyers a high-end offering that rates well in performance, luxury and innovation.

PHOTO: GARRETT CORTESE

When it comes to premium watersports-specific boats—think top luxury, killer tech and jaw-dropping performance—there are plenty of choices. One not to be ignored is the Ultré 23ZX from Texas-based Tigé. Whether you're running it, riding in it, shredding behind it, or looking at it from across the lake, this 23-footer hits with a slick combination of beauty and beast.

Pronounced "ultra," the Ultré ZX is just that in every facet. Its simplified badging, clean lines and custom details scream "means business." Once on board, the luxury and innovative features are instantly noticeable. The premium vinyl

SCAN ME

To see our online photo gallery of the Tigé Ultré 23ZX, scan this tag or visit boatingmag.com/3448.

PHOTOS: GARRETT CORTESE

and signature stitching, along with the complementary patterns of the soft-touch flooring, help set the Ultré ZX apart. Padding is supple and bolsters reside in all the right spots—your crew will appreciate the curved backs of the wraparound seating. The aft bench flips into the cockpit to become rear-facing, and the back can be lowered to act as a tabletop. But Tigé also provides a unique, hidden table that slides out from under the walk-through.

A special feature of the wraparound seating is what Tigé has dubbed its FastFlip Co-Captain's Chair. Resembling seating found aboard sterndrive runabouts, it features a convertible backrest that can face either forward or aft. Both options proved comfortable, and a bolster adds support when facing forward. A touchscreen beside the seat allows the co-captain to control the Ultré's audio, lighting and even a heater—one of the coolest features that sits at their feet, literally.

A built-in electric cooler adds both luxury and convenience to the Ultré ZX. The UltréChill keeps your beverages and snacks cold and

fresh, and can continue running with the engine off. (The cooler shuts down if the battery levels drop to a certain point.) Positioned just right and upholstered, it serves as a footrest for a co-captain facing forward. Before decrying this cooler as taking away a common wakeboat storage spot, know that Tigé has integrated ample space beneath the seat.

With a very high gunwale, the Ultré 23ZX offers added comfort and security when cruising. This deep cockpit also helps maximize storage. The space beneath the wraparound seating rates as some of the deepest I've seen aboard a watersports boat—in fact, it was large enough for my 6-foot-1-inch, 190-pound self to crawl inside and close myself in. So, yes, the space is large enough to hide a body.

Speaking of bodies, several can lounge comfortably in the bow, which is a hybrid between traditional and pickle-fork styles. Tigé carried the Ultré 23ZX's depth through the bow, making it one of the more secure-feeling I've seen. The space is customizable to become a playpen or have a padded walk-through, while the backrest at the front also flips down, revealing a padded step to aid in boarding over the bow. Storage abounds underneath, and a dedicated locker handles the anchor.

> Keep the Tigé board sleeve on for traveling, then clip it into the integrated straps on the SolidShade tower once aboard the boat.

For the indecisive loungers on the boat—the Ultré 23ZX can accommodate up to 16—Tigé has integrated dual-facing transom seats. Above the engine compartment, you can flip up a backrest and face into the wraparound seating area. Or flip the opposite section up and face the water. Both proved very comfortable. The padded walk-through bisecting the transom lounge provides easy swim-platform access, where you can find two more comfy seats. The high gunwales make for a big step down to the platform, but Tigé offers an optional step that floats just above the swim platform. Push a button and the rear section of the power platform lowers into the water, making entry and exit much more comfortable. A giant surf locker underneath the transom seats offers room for multiple boards and other pieces of gear.

When it comes to riding, the Ultré 23ZX delivers, thanks in large part to its 7,400-pound dry weight, 4,000 pounds of internal ballast and the integration of the TAPS 3T system. The wakes and waves are clean, crisp and fun for all levels because riders can adjust them easily to suit a variety of skills and styles. Making those adjustments is as simple as a finger tap. The helm of the Ultré ZX is outfitted with one large touchscreen, which keeps the sightlines clean without losing any functionality. Tigé calls it the Go System. Simply tap the "Go" icon on the screen, select your discipline (wakeboard, surf, foil or ski) and your level, and the boat does the rest. The head-up display in the center of the screen features mph, rpm and other essential data, while other functions "float" on the sides. Simply drag in the icon and you have access to make adjustments as needed. Stern-thruster controls come via a toggle switch at the front of the throttle, while a second toggle by the thumb allows for redundant control of TAPS. It's all simple and highly effective.

Luxury wakeboat buyers can compare the Ultré 23ZX to MasterCraft's redesigned XStar 23, which has its own unique luxury and tech features, but comes at a higher price (starting at $395,000). What makes the Ultré 23ZX stand out among its other premium-class peers are not only the features that can't be found on other boats, but also how much you wish other boats had them after using them. And if you're worried a 23-foot boat isn't enough for you, don't fret. Tigé also offers the Ultré ZX in a 25-footer. *—Garrett Cortese*

High Points

- ▶ Smart steering wheel allows quick and easy adjustments the audio system, TAPS, surf side, video camera display and more.
- ▶ Alpha E3 SolidShade tower raises and lowers quickly while offering integrated, portable board storage.
- ▶ Integrated high-pressure air-pump system is great for families who like to tube or bring inflatable air mats to the lake.

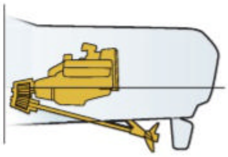
Low Point

- ▶ The SolidShade tower is tall and the position of the wakeboarding tow point above it is very high, making it hard to quickly attach a wakeboard rope.

· **LOA:** 23'5" · **BEAM:** 8'6" · **DRAFT:** 2'1" · **DISPLACEMENT:** 7,400 lb. · **TRANSOM DEADRISE:** NA · **BRIDGE CLEARANCE:** NA · **BALLAST:** 4,000 lb. · **FUEL CAPACITY:** 76 gal. · **MAX HP/TORQUE:** 510/580 ft.-lb. · **AVAILABLE POWER:** Indmar 6.2L Roushcharged Raptor 575 (510 hp/580 ft.-lb. of torque)

Price: $325,500
(base MSRP, includes triple-axle trailer)

AVAILABLE POWER:
V-DRIVE



HOW WE TESTED

ENGINE: Indmar 6.2L Roushcharged 575 **DRIVE/PROP:** V-drive/17" x 15.5" Acme 3077 **GEAR RATIO:** 1.76:1 **FUEL LOAD:** 38 gal. **CREW WEIGHT:** 750 lb.

TIGÉ BOATS
Abilene, Texas; tige.com

C

BOATING
CERTIFIED TEST RESULTS

SPEED			EFFICIENCY					OPERATION	
rpm	knots	mph	gph	naut. mpg	stat. mpg	n. mi. range	s. mi. range	angle	sound level
1000	4.78	5.50	0.00	NA	NA	NA	NA	0	64
1500	6.52	7.50	0.00	NA	NA	NA	NA	0	67
2000	7.73	8.90	0.00	NA	NA	NA	NA	0	73
2500	9.38	10.80	0.00	NA	NA	NA	NA	3	80
3000	13.90	16.00	0.00	NA	NA	NA	NA	4	81
3500	20.68	23.80	0.00	NA	NA	NA	NA	4	85
4000	25.63	29.50	0.00	NA	NA	NA	NA	3	86
4500	28.68	33.00	0.00	NA	NA	NA	NA	3	87
5000	31.63	36.40	0.00	NA	NA	NA	NA	0	87
5500	32.41	37.30	0.00	NA	NA	NA	NA	0	93

PHOTO: GARRETT CORTESE

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CENTURION
Nv233

SCAN ME

To watch our video review of the Centurion Nv233, scan this tag or visit boatingmag .com/3449.

PHOTO: GARRETT CORTESE

In 2024, Centurion introduced its Fe model as a way to get new customers into the Centurion lineup for a lower price, as well as to cater to legacy Centurion customers looking for a new model without fully upgrading. For 2025, Centurion has taken that approach a step further. The popular Fe line is now available in three sizes with a plethora of options. Introduced for 2025 is the Nv line, featuring the Nv213 and Nv233. The all-new Nv models have a bold new look, killer performance and a more palatable price for many.

I was able to test the Nv233, which measures 23 feet, 3 inches and holds up to 14 people. At first glance, the Nv233 looks unique because it is so different from anything else in the Centurion lineup.

BOATING CERTIFIED TEST

#3449

CENTURION NV233

The new Nv line offers a bold look and great performance at a palatable price.

PHOTOS: GARRETT CORTESE

The hullsides feature angular faceted designs, giving the Nv233 an aggressive yet clean look. It also sits lower in the water compared with its Fe siblings, adding to its sleek, aggressive stance. The large Centurion badging toward the transom further sets it apart as something different and new. Watersports enthusiasts with a keen eye might see some similarities to the now-retired Supreme ZS232 of years past (Centurion owns the Supreme brand), but the Nv233 is 100 percent new and 100 percent Centurion.

Of course, being built in the Centurion family means the Nv is constructed around the acclaimed Opti-V hull design, which offers 21 degrees of deadrise at the transom. This deeper-V design not only provides for a more comfortable ride in choppier waters, but it also makes it easier to be displaced by the ballast, which in turn kicks up sizable wakes and waves for riding fun. When it comes to ballast, the Nv233 packs a punch, with the total available weight adding up to a whopping 5,000 pounds. More than half of this total can be filled in

PHOTO: GARRETT CORTESE

less than 90 seconds if you opt for the available RAMFILL2 system when ordering yours.

To shape that displaced water into a fun riding surface, the Nv233 can be equipped with another of Centurion's acclaimed systems: QuickSurf Pro. These transom-mounted plates deploy at the push of a button and create solid wakesurfing waves that feature a clean, consistent face and a large pocket with plenty of push. The optional center-mounted Silent Stinger Wake Plate can be adjusted to change the size and shape of the wave—allowing riders of all skill levels and styles to enjoy riding behind the Nv233—but it also incorporates the boat's exhaust, keeping it underwater to reduce overall engine noise. The Silent Stinger Wake Plate also adjusts the size and shape of the wakeboarding wake and the Nv233's running attitude. With a couple of clicks of the steering-wheel-mounted paddle shifters, the captain can quickly and easily make adjustments.

> The Crusader engine PP-V transmission's unique angle allows the engine to sit level during tow sessions, eliminating oil starvation and adding longevity.

The helm is clean and simple, avoiding the clutter found aboard a lot of other boats. A wide-screen touchscreen offers the captain easy, intuitive control of all the boat's systems. The new user interface is simple. From ballast and surf setups to lighting, navigation and more, it's all right at your fingertips. Another nice feature is the new Wet Sounds head unit, just to the left of the steering wheel, for quick control of the tunes. The windshield doesn't wrap all the way around, but that has advantages for when a captain needs to quickly get behind the wheel without having to walk around the tower to board the boat.

Roswell's tried-and-true Battle Advance tower is standard on the Nv233, and it not only looks great with the new lines of the boat, but also offers versatility with an oversize Bimini overhead for added shade and comfort. For interior amenities, Centurion doesn't skimp just to keep the cost of the Nv233 down. The same Spradling vinyl with a 17 mm topcoat found in the top Ri265 model will be found here. Stitching is strong, cushioning is supportive, and you'll never have to worry about stepping on upholstery. To help you avoid it, though, Centurion has added a step into the rear bench when accessing the transom. Beneath all the seats, storage is plentiful for all the requisite gear needed for a day on the lake. For added comfort on cooler days, the Nv233 can also be equipped with extendable heater vents. Despite its lower profile, the wraparound seating is well below the gunwales, offering comfortable and secure seats for all on board.

To shop against the Nv233, buyers should take a look at the Moomba Mojo, another 23-footer that comes well-equipped at $123,910, and is known for its ease of use and solid performance. While the Mojo has less total ballast, it is rated to hold 17 passengers.

Whether you're a buyer looking to move into the V-drive watersports market or you're looking for high-end performance at a very approachable price, the Nv233 should be on your list. Centurion has done a terrific job of blending new stylings and creature comforts with the on-water performance for which it is known. —*Garrett Cortese*

High Points

- ▶ The single screen and new interface make the Nv233 very easy to operate.
- ▶ Battery isolation and PDM systems are integrated into the glove box, so you don't have to crawl into a hatch to find them.
- ▶ Transom lockers allow for convenient spots to put wet ropes and life jackets, and all underseating storage is Rhino-lined, adding a finished touch while helping dampen sound and vibration.

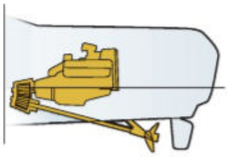
Low Point

- ▶ It lacks a convertible rear bench, which is standard in many of today's wakeboats.

· **LOA:** 23'3" · **BEAM:** 8'6" · **DRAFT:** 3'0" · **DISPLACEMENT:** 5,425 lb. · **TRANSOM DEADRISE:** 21 degrees · **BRIDGE CLEARANCE:** NA · **BALLAST:** 5,000 lb. · **FUEL CAPACITY:** 70 gal. · **MAX HORSEPOWER:** 375 · **AVAILABLE POWER:** Single 375 to 450 (450 ft.-lb. of torque) Challenger by Crusader 6.0L or 6.0L HO V-drive

Price: $229,178
(without tax, dealer prep, or freight)

AVAILABLE POWER:
V-DRIVE



HOW WE TESTED

ENGINE: Crusader 6.0L L96 375 hp/409 ft.-lb. **DRIVE/PROP:** V-drive/Acme 2907 16" x 15" 4-blade nibral **GEAR RATIO:** 1.72:1 **FUEL LOAD:** 47 gal. **CREW WEIGHT:** 550 lb.

CENTURION BOATS
Merced, California; centurionboats.com

C

BOATING
CERTIFIED
TEST
RESULTS

SPEED			EFFICIENCY					OPERATION	
rpm	knots	mph	naut. gph	stat. mpg	n. mi. mpg	s. mi. range	sound range	angle	level
1000	4.26	4.90	1.30	3.28	3.77	206	237	1	66
1500	5.82	6.70	2.10	2.77	3.19	175	201	1	67
2000	7.13	8.20	3.60	1.98	2.28	125	144	3	71
2500	8.69	10.00	5.60	1.55	1.79	98	113	5	74
3000	13.82	15.90	8.00	1.73	1.99	109	125	6	77
3200	9.52	11.20	11.20	0.85	1.00	60	63	8	81
3500	20.25	23.30	9.90	2.05	2.35	129	148	4	80
4000	24.33	28.00	12.30	1.98	2.28	125	143	4	82
4500	27.55	31.70	16.00	1.72	1.98	108	125	2	85
5000	30.50	35.10	20.60	1.48	1.70	93	107	2	87
5600	33.46	38.50	30.60	1.09	1.26	69	79	2	90

WAKESURF SPEED: RECORDED WITH FULL BALLAST
MOST ECONOMICAL CRUISING SPEED

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BOATING CERTIFIED TEST

#3450

SUPRA SA

The official tow boat of the Pro Wakeboard Tour, the Supra SA offers more of everything for 2025.

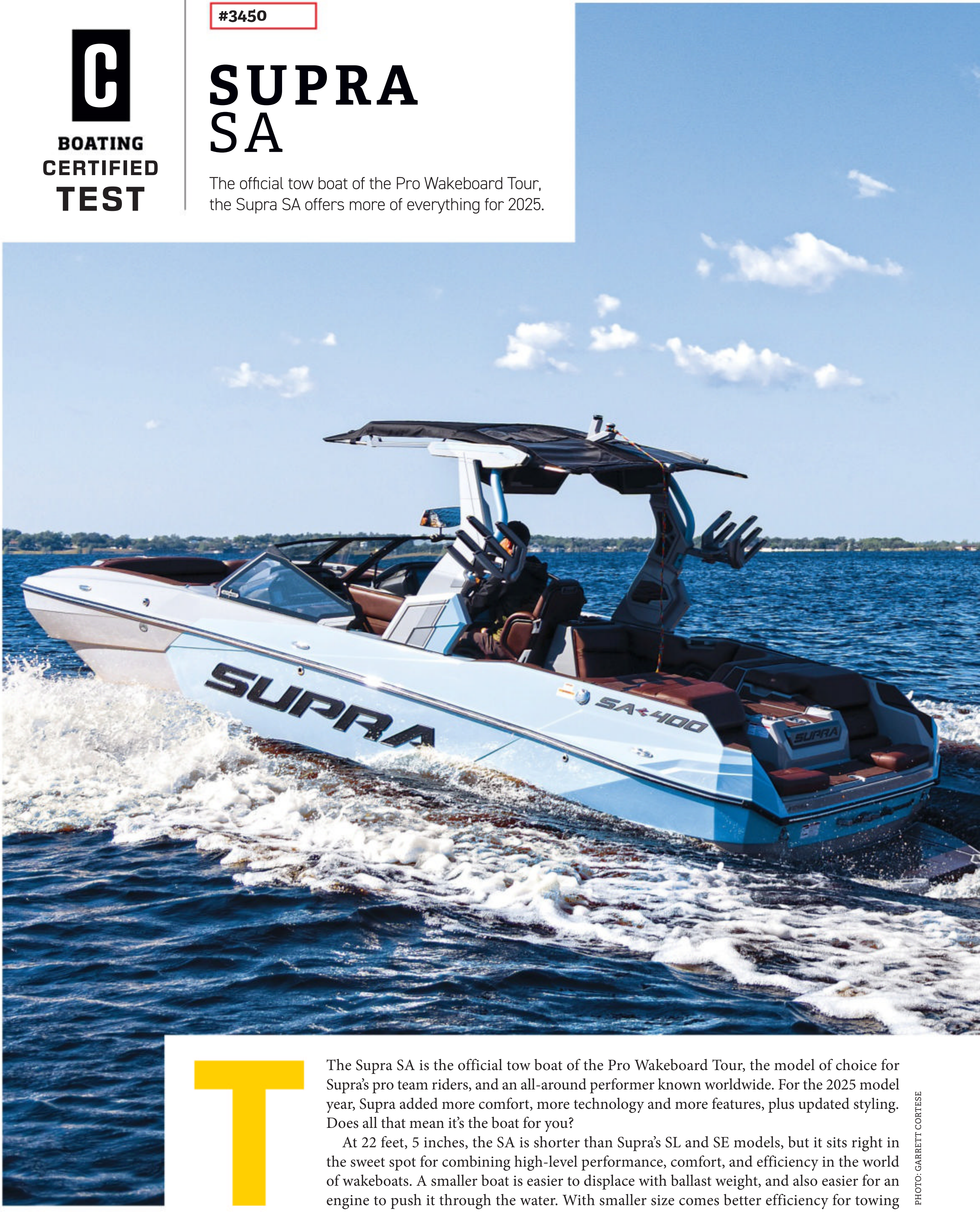
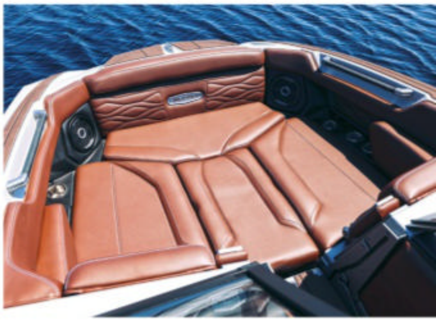


PHOTO: GARRETT CORTESE

The Supra SA is the official tow boat of the Pro Wakeboard Tour, the model of choice for Supra's pro team riders, and an all-around performer known worldwide. For the 2025 model year, Supra added more comfort, more technology and more features, plus updated styling. Does all that mean it's the boat for you?

At 22 feet, 5 inches, the SA is shorter than Supra's SL and SE models, but it sits right in the sweet spot for combining high-level performance, comfort, and efficiency in the world of wakeboats. A smaller boat is easier to displace with ballast weight, and also easier for an engine to push it through the water. With smaller size comes better efficiency for towing

SCAN ME
To see an online photo gallery of the Supra SA, scan this tag or visit boatingmag.com/3450.



PHOTOS: GARRETT CORTESE

and maneuvering in tight spots. Rated for 16 passengers, it possesses plenty of space for friends and family.

One of the first things buyers might notice that's different about the 2025 SA are the lounge-style seats built into the transom. Providing a great spot for relaxing, the backs hinge forward to reveal storage space that features hooks for hanging wet vests and towropes to drip dry. Under the seats? That's where the Supra put a port-to-starboard surf locker, capable of holding multiple wakesurf boards—all accessible from the platform. Opt for the powered DropStep in your swim platform, and you'll have an easy time getting out of the water and lounging in those transom seats. A new optional feature you might consider is the washdown system. With this optional washdown, you can rinse away a spill or just hose yourself off on a hot day.

The comfortable seating throughout the SA features Supra's Chill Tech Vinyl standard, which offers cooler fabric than other vinyls. Supra's combination of cushioning and upholstery is a perfect mix,

and the SA's high gunwales provide support and security. Underneath each seat you'll find more storage, and in the floor resides a dedicated spot for a cooler. The rear bench of the U-shaped seating flips over to become a rear-facing bench or a tabletop. Standard heated seats in both the captain's chair and OB spots are nice touches, and both also can be optioned with an air-conditioning setting. The captain's chair offers power adjustments in all four directions and all the support one needs for a long day's driving—and we already mentioned the standard heating and optional cooling. Like the settings in a luxury car, you can save the seat's positions as presets. In the bow, we discovered more quality seating.

Standard on all Supra models, the FXOne power tower quickly lowered and raised at the push of a button. If you want even more automated convenience in your tower, opt for the powered Bimini top. No more dealing with zippers, awkwardly tight boot covers, clamps or anything else—just push a button and watch your SA become a shaded haven in seconds.

> New for 2025, the Supra SA incorporates a bow anchor locker, making handling the hook cleaner and easier.

You operate the SA's systems via two large touchscreen displays—one centered above the steering wheel and the other to the right. Customize the top screen to show the info you want: navigation, vitals, cameras, etc. On the right screen, control all the SA's systems, and everything is accessible with just a finger tap or two. Supra's acclaimed AutoWake system takes a lot of the guesswork and variables out of the equation, which is great for families who are just getting into watersports. AutoWake's onboard sensors detect pitch, roll, yaw and the overall running attitude of the boat, and then automatically adjust to keep the boat running at an optimal position based on the chosen activity (wakeboarding, wakesurfing port side or starboard, etc.).

As the tow boat of the Pro Wakeboard Tour, the wake and wave of the SA are world-class. With 4,100 pounds of subfloor ballast and room for 16, the SA can displace a lot of water. Utilizing the Swell Surf System to shape the wakesurf waves, it treats riders to a clean surface with a big pocket that provides a lot of push. The center-mounted Supra Smartplate can make waves flatter and mellower, or steeper and more powerful. Again, it serves beginners and pros equally well.

The SA comes equipped with one of the coolest audio systems on the market: Dynamic Sound Design. This finely tuned array of components creates an immersive sound environment, and includes first-of-its-kind speakers mounted in the tower arms. Audio can also be controlled via a touchscreen mounted next to the glove box, so the captain doesn't have to worry about changing tunes while focused on pulling a rider.

For comparison, see MasterCraft's X22 ($289,000 well-equipped, with a tandem trailer), which also features lounge-style transom seats and seating for 16, and quickly makes great wakes and waves for watersports fun. While a power tower and convertible rear seat aren't standard, they can be added as options.

Combine the Supra SA's performance, technology and features with a long standards list, and you get an all-around performer that's tough to ignore, whether you're shopping for your first boat or you are a seasoned pro. Pound for pound, the Supra SA proves a good bang for your buck in the ever-competitive watersports-boat market. —*Garrett Cortese*

High Points

- Smart steering wheel features an array of buttons to make controlling the SA's systems simple for the captain. It's a standard feature.
- DSD audio is amazing and can be tuned to create whatever sound environment is desired at the time.
- Optional dual stern thruster is incorporated into the knob of the throttle, allowing for easy maneuvering of the SA.

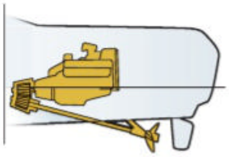
Low Point

- Engine start/stop and horn buttons are situated in awkward positions behind the steering wheel.

· **LOA:** 22'5" · **BEAM:** 8'6" · **DRAFT:** 2'4" · **DISPLACEMENT:** 6,450 lb. · **TRANSOM DEADRISE:** NA · **BRIDGE CLEARANCE:** 4'6" · **BALLAST:** 4,100 lb. · **FUEL CAPACITY:** 67 gal. · **MAX HP/TORQUE:** 510/575 ft.-lb. · **AVAILABLE POWER:** Single Indmar Raptor 400, 450, 575 ft.-lb.

Price: Not available
(at press time)

AVAILABLE POWER:
V-DRIVE



HOW WE TESTED

ENGINE: Indmar Raptor 400 6.2L (315 hp, 404 ft.-lb. of torque) **DRIVE/PROP:** V-drive/16" x 13.9" Acme **GEAR RATIO:** 1.76:1 **FUEL LOAD:** 67 gal. **CREW WEIGHT:** 200 lb.

SUPRA BOATS
Maryville, Tennessee; supraboats.com

C
BOATING
CERTIFIED
TEST
RESULTS

SPEED			EFFICIENCY					OPERATION	
rpm	knots	mph	gph	naut. mpg	stat. mpg	n. mi. range	s. mi. range	angle	sound level
1000	4.17	4.80	0.00	NA	NA	NA	NA	1	64
1500	5.21	6.00	0.00	NA	NA	NA	NA	1	66
2000	6.69	7.70	0.00	NA	NA	NA	NA	3	66
2500	7.65	8.80	0.00	NA	NA	NA	NA	5	72
3000	11.21	12.90	0.00	NA	NA	NA	NA	7	77
3500	18.60	21.40	0.00	NA	NA	NA	NA	5	79
4000	21.72	25.00	0.00	NA	NA	NA	NA	5	79
4500	24.77	28.50	0.00	NA	NA	NA	NA	4	82
5000	26.59	30.60	0.00	NA	NA	NA	NA	4	85
5500	28.68	33.00	0.00	NA	NA	NA	NA	4	85

PHOTO: GARRETT CORTESE

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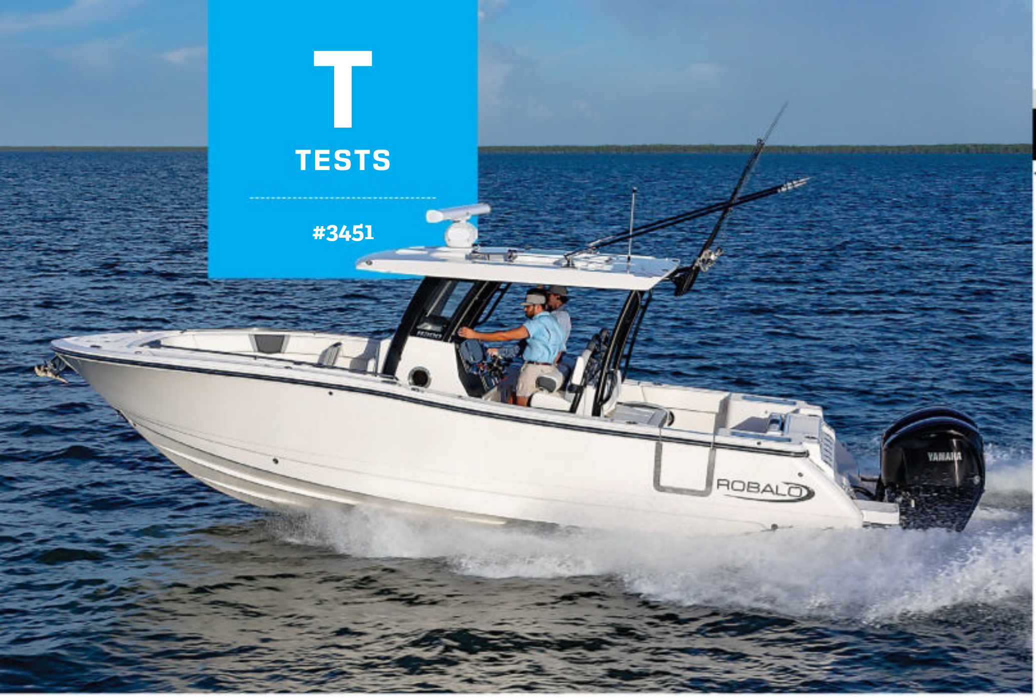


T
TESTS
#3451

ROBALO
R300

Robalo's R300 is the latest introduction into its center-console lineup, and it's impressively equipped with standard features for beachcombing, touring and, in keeping with Robalo's heritage, serious fishing.

Robalo reinvented its popular 30 with a Michael Peters running surface and a Robalo-engineered fishing-and-fun machine on top. The new hull offered impressively crisp handling during sharp turns and while crossing aggressive chop. Top speed tapped nearly 60 mph. At rest, the 10-foot-6-inch beam held steady footing for efficient fishing or comfortable sunbathing.

Twin Yamaha 350s with the Helm Master EX Full Maneuverability system, joystick, and integrated autopilot system provides exciting handling and confidence-enhancing easy docking. It also supplies station-keeping capabilities that can hold the vessel on a GPS point in an orientation that the skipper selects—a feature essential for awaiting a slot at the gas dock. It also allows the vessel to drift in its current orientation along whatever line the seas determine.

A spacious 10-foot-6-inch beam is equally suited for relaxing or battling fish. The console has three adjustable bucket seats with flip-up bolsters. Driving seated or standing, the tilt wheel is within comfortable reach. The hardtop underside is powder-coated black to contrast with the custom white hull color on our test boat, an effect pleasing to the eye. It seemed to reduce glare from the sea. Overhead handrails stabilize riders in rough water.

In the cockpit, standard mezzanine seating faces electrically actuated foldaway transom seating. There's a Yeti cooler under the mezzanine seat cushion, and seatbacks and cushions for the port and starboard lounges can be stowed for fishing.

For anglers, there are ample rod holders in the transom, gunwales and hardtop. Dual 28-gallon livewells with acrylic lids flank the transom seat and are plumbed through a sea chest. Fish can be landed via transom and portside dive doors. The console itself opens from the front, offering easy access to the deep compartment plumbed with a toilet and sink.

Fishability, performance and family amenities make the R300 a pride to own and a top resale brand in the boater's marketplace. —*Randy Vance*

To watch our video review of the Robalo R300, go to boatingmag .com/3451. **MORE ONLINE**

High Points

- ▶ Crisp handling with the efficiency of a Michael Peters hull system optimizes speed and fuel efficiency.
- ▶ A protective, three-sided bonded-glass windshield opens on sturdy stainless-steel struts while running at sea.
- ▶ Silicone upholstery is nearly stain-proof and UV-proof for long, mildew-free life.

Low Point

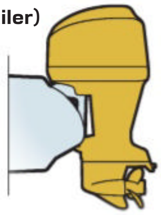
- ▶ The transom seat switched from electrically operated to manual.

Toughest Competitor

- ▶ Blackfin's 302 CC ($452,108 base with joystick and dual Mercury 350s) also specializes in building tough, fishable and luxurious boats. Blackfin boasts a stepped bottom for efficiency, stowable cushions for convertibility, and a comparably high bow for seaworthy reliability.

· **LOA:** 30'6" · **BEAM:** 10'6" · **DRAFT:** 2'0" (motors up) · **DISPLACEMENT:** 9,900 lb. (with power) · **TRANSOM DEADRISE:** 21 degrees · **BRIDGE CLEARANCE:** 8'5" · **FUEL CAPACITY:** 280 gal. · **MAX HORSEPOWER:** 700 · **AVAILABLE POWER:** Twin outboards from Mercury or Yamaha

Price: $323,745
(as tested without trailer)



AVAILABLE POWER:
OUTBOARD

HOW WE TESTED

ENGINES: Twin Yamaha 350 **DRIVE/PROP:** Outboard/SWS II 15" x 20" 3-blade stainless steel **GEAR RATIO:** 1.75:1 **FUEL LOAD:** 140 gal. **CREW WEIGHT:** 600 lb.

ROBALO BOATS
Nashville, Georgia; robalo.com

C
BOATING
CERTIFIED
TEST
RESULTS

SPEED			EFFICIENCY					OPERATION	
rpm	knots	mph	gph	naut. mpg	stat. mpg	n. mi. range	s. mi. range	angle	sound level
1000	5.5	6.3	2.6	2.1	2.4	530.6	610.6	1	63
1500	7.3	8.4	4.5	1.6	1.9	406.3	467.6	2	67
2000	8.4	9.7	7.6	1.1	1.3	278.0	320.0	4	71
2500	10.0	11.5	12.0	0.8	1.0	209.9	241.5	6	77
3000	14.3	16.5	16.1	0.9	1.0	223.7	257.5	7	82
3500	25.7	29.6	16.2	1.6	1.8	400.1	460.4	4	85
4000	31.3	36.0	23.5	1.3	1.5	335.5	386.0	3	86
4500	36.3	41.8	29.7	1.2	1.4	307.8	354.2	4	89
5000	40.4	46.5	37.6	1.1	1.2	270.8	311.6	3	92
5500	44.5	51.2	53.7	0.8	1.0	208.8	240.3	3	93
6000	51.0	58.7	62.1	0.8	0.9	206.8	238.0	3	95

MOST ECONOMICAL CRUISING SPEED

PHOTO: COURTESY ROBALO BOATS

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BOSTON WHALER
210 Vantage

The 210 Vantage is the newest and smallest of Boston Whaler's dual-console fleet. It shows its versatility immediately upon entrance to the cockpit, where its comfy, flip-up jump-seat backrests fold down flat to the deck when not in use to create a roomy, raised casting platform for anglers.

Up front, the recliner couches and backrests feature the perfect amount of recline. High gunwales and low-profile grab rails offer excellent security without impeding fishability. An optional side-mounted table ($2,006) supports a filler cushion and transforms the bow into a playpen. Or stow the cushions to create a raised casting platform.

I was surprised that our test Whaler came with a 3.4L V-6 Mercury FourStroke 200—the smallest engine available. But many dual-console buyers aren't go-fast boaters, and with a light load of two people and 30 gallons of gas, the 200 reached plane in 4 seconds without excess bowrise and cruised to 30 mph in 8.4 seconds. Top speed? 42.9 mph. You can bump up the power to a 225 hp version of the 3.4L V-6, which posted a top speed of 45.6 mph during Mercury testing, or go for the Merc 4.6L V-8, which cracked 50 mph during another factory test.

The 210 Vantage comes standard with Mercury's Active Trim, which keeps the boat in proper trim automatically. The 210 weighs a beefy 3,810 pounds, which lent a more substantial feel than some other dual-consoles I've tested. A big reason for that is the Whaler's Unibond construction, wherein closed-cell foam is injected into every available cavity between the hull and liner to make it unsinkable. Our test boat's optional 12-inch Simrad NSX chart plotter flush-mounted into the dash. The portside console features a cozy head compartment with a pump-out toilet when equipped with the Plumbing Package ($1,568), which also includes a stern shower fed by a 9-gallon tank.

Other options? Get the portside lounge ($4,690) with its three-position backrest that can provide comfortable seating for two facing rearward or forward when cruising. Anglers will want the Fishing Package ($1,943), which requires the portside lounge option to house the 18-gallon livewell. The bundle also includes raw-water washdown and two additional rod holders. The option also includes a lockable rod storage compartment. —*Alan Jones*

To watch our video review of the Boston Whaler 210 Vantage, go to boatingmag.com/3452. **MORE ONLINE**

High Points

- ▶ Extended swim platformettes help those boarding from the dock or the water.
- ▶ The 26-inch minimum cockpit depth is above average for a boat this length and improves safety.
- ▶ A wind dam in the walk-through reduces the breeze into the cockpit on cool days.

Low Points

- ▶ Opening the storage hatches in the bow requires reaching under the cushions. Side paddle latches would be an improvement.
- ▶ The backrest on the optional port lounger gives only those sitting in one direction the proper amount of recline. The other side is vertical.
- ▶ The head compartment needs a sink for post-use wash-ups.

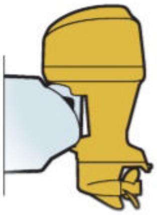
Toughest Competitor

- ▶ The Grady-White Freedom 215 sports eerily similar specs to the 210 Vantage. Boston Whaler offers Mercury exclusively, and the Grady-White is exclusively Yamaha. The Vantage 210 is heavier by 660 pounds and is rated to carry nine people, which is one more than the Freedom 215, which is offered at an MSRP of $114,480 with a Yamaha F200.

▪ **LOA:** 21'3" ▪ **BEAM:** 8'6" ▪ **DRAFT:** 1'6" (motor up) ▪ **DISPLACEMENT:** 3,810 lb. (without engine) ▪ **TRANSOM DEADRISE:** 18 degrees ▪ **BRIDGE CLEARANCE:** 6'11" ▪ **FUEL CAPACITY:** 80 gal. ▪ **MAX HORSEPOWER:** 250 ▪ **AVAILABLE POWER:** Single 200, 225, or 250 Mercury Verado outboard

Price: $117,570
(base)

AVAILABLE POWER:
OUTBOARD



HOW WE TESTED

ENGINE: Mercury V-6 FourStroke 200 hp **DRIVE/PROP:** Outboard/16" x 15" Enertia 3-blade stainless steel **GEAR RATIO:** 1.85:1 **FUEL LOAD:** 30 gal. **WATER ON BOARD:** 0 gal. **CREW WEIGHT:** 380 lb.

BOSTON WHALER BOATS
Edgewater, Florida; bostonwhaler.com

C
BOATING
CERTIFIED TEST RESULTS

SPEED			EFFICIENCY					OPERATION	
rpm	knots	mph	gph	naut. mpg	stat. mpg	n. mi. range	s. mi. range	angle	sound level
1000	4.5	5.2	1.0	4.5	5.2	325.3	374.4	1	57
1500	5.9	6.8	1.6	3.7	4.2	264.0	303.8	1	59
2000	7.3	8.4	2.4	3.0	3.5	217.7	250.5	3	64
2500	8.3	9.6	3.5	2.4	2.7	170.7	196.5	4	66
3000	11.3	13.0	5.4	2.1	2.4	150.0	172.7	7	69
3500	18.8	21.6	6.0	3.1	3.6	225.2	259.2	6	75
4000	23.9	27.5	7.5	3.2	3.7	229.0	263.5	4	78
4500	27.2	31.3	9.2	3.0	3.4	212.5	244.6	5	82
5000	30.8	35.5	11.1	2.8	3.2	199.8	229.9	4	84
5500	35.1	40.4	16.4	2.1	2.5	153.9	177.1	4	88
5900	37.2	42.9	17.6	2.1	2.4	152.3	175.3	4	90

MOST ECONOMICAL CRUISING SPEED

PHOTO: COURTESY BOSTON WHALER BOATS

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HIGHFIELD
Velox 420

Highfield's Velox 420 is a welcome addition to the entry-level-boat segment. Priced at $36,000, this jet-powered RIB is intended to fill the compact runabout niche somewhat abandoned by popular boat brands. Highfield is pitching the Velox not only as a tender, but also as a family boat especially ideal for younger captains.

The 14-foot-7-inch Velox 420 features an aluminum deep-V hull surrounded by Orca Hypalon tubes. The powder-coated aluminum hull incorporates the boat deck, an integrated 14.5-gallon fuel tank and the swim platform. The helm console and bow boarding step are molded fiberglass. The boat is powered by a 90 hp Rotax 900 ACE jet drive—the same reliable three-cylinder 899cc powertrain featured in the Sea-Doo Spark watercraft. A fiberglass insert forms the jet pump intake and the aft center of the running surface to provide efficient intake flow in a shape that would be challenging to form in aluminum.

The aluminum hatch over the engine bay is also the base for the main seat, wide enough for two or a tight fit for three people. The pivoting seat backrest enables facing forward or aft on this seat. The deep boarding platform is covered with the same MarineMat material that covers the deck. There's also a small seat on the forward helm console and a seat pad in the bow peak (useful at rest, not underway). Stowage space is limited to some room within the console, accessed by raising the forward seat. This is a 14-footer, remember.

The helm console holds a Medallion touchscreen display that can be used to select Rotax performance modes (Eco, Docking and Ski). Switches for lighting and the head for the optional audio system ($920) are to port of the wheel. There is a wireless device charger next to the display screen. The console is topped with a small windscreen and a robust grab handle.

The 90 hp jet pushed this 1,060-pound vessel to a top speed of 38 mph with a light load. Performance is typical jet—strong acceleration starts at about 5,500 rpm; at speed in a hard turn, the radius tightens until the boat starts to slide a bit, but this is easy to control. Fuel economy is outstanding at better than 7 mpg at cruising speeds, for a range of about 100 miles. That's a lot of fun per gallon. —*Charles Plueddeman*

To see a photo gallery of the Highfield Velox 420, go to boatingmag.com/3453.
MORE ONLINE

High Points

- Boat, fuel and trailer combined will weigh less than 1,400 pounds—an easy tow for compact vehicles.
- No prop, no trim, and minimal maintenance with a jet drive make for easy ownership.
- Beach this boat with no worries thanks to a rugged aluminum hull with keel guard.
- RIB offers excellent stability at rest and absorbs dock bumps.

Low Points

- High-rpm jet drive is very noisy and transmits significant vibration to the cockpit.
- Fuel fill below the bow seat cushion is challenging to reach and offers potential for spills within the boat.
- Minimal stowage space.

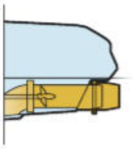
Toughest Competition

- The 15-foot-9-inch Scarab 165SE (base price $45,460 with trailer) weighs about 1,600 pounds (2,300 pounds on its steel trailer) and is powered by a 170 hp Rotax 1630 ACE jet drive with up to 300 hp as an option. This is a very stylish jet runabout with more performance and storage space than the Velox.

· **LOA:** 14'7" · **BEAM:** 6'9" · **DRAFT:** NA · **DISPLACEMENT:** 1,060 lb. · **TRANSOM DEADRISE:** 22 degrees · **FUEL CAPACITY:** 14.5 gal. · **MAX HORSEPOWER:** 90 · **AVAILABLE POWER:** Single Rotax 900 ACE jet drive

Price: $36,000
(base MSRP without trailer)

AVAILABLE POWER:
JET DRIVE



HOW WE TESTED

ENGINE: Single 90 hp Rotax 900 ACE jet drive **DRIVE/PROP:** Jet drive/144 mm x 15/19" pitch stainless-steel impeller **GEAR RATIO:** 1:1 **FUEL LOAD:** 6 gal. **CREW WEIGHT:** 190 lb.

HIGHFIELD BOATS
Cadillac, Michigan; highfieldboats.com

C
BOATING
CERTIFIED
TEST
RESULTS

SPEED			EFFICIENCY					OPERATION	
rpm	knots	mph	gph	naut. mpg	stat. mpg	n. mi. range	s. mi. range	angle	sound level
2000	2.61	3.00	0.30	8.69	10.00	113	131	0	71
2500	3.48	4.00	0.50	6.95	8.00	91	104	1	76
3000	4.34	5.00	0.70	6.21	7.14	81	93	3	77
3500	4.34	5.00	0.80	5.43	6.25	71	82	4	81
4000	5.21	6.00	1.00	5.21	6.00	68	78	5	87
4500	5.21	6.00	1.30	4.01	4.62	52	60	6	88
5000	6.95	8.00	2.00	3.48	4.00	45	52	8	90
5500	12.17	14.00	2.20	5.53	6.36	72	83	7	88
6000	18.25	21.00	2.80	6.52	7.50	85	98	3	89
6500	21.72	25.00	3.30	6.58	7.58	86	99	2	94
7000	26.07	30.00	4.10	6.36	7.32	83	95	2	95
7500	29.55	34.00	5.20	5.68	6.54	74	85	2	97
7880	33.02	38.00	5.70	5.79	6.67	76	87	2	99

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PHOTO: COURTESY HIGHFIELD BOATS

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By Kevin Falvey

VOLVO PENTA ELECTRONIC VESSEL CONTROL

The industry-first EVC upgrade by Volvo Penta offers a number of benefits for boaters, whether they are selling, buying or keeping an older boat.

LOW SPEED
STATION
CRUISE CONTROL
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SINGLE LEVER
VOLVO PENTA

CONTROL New controls, screens and functions are all part of what's possible with a Volvo Penta Electronic Vessel Control upgrade.

Maybe you own an older boat and don't want to replace it but would love some "new boat" features such as assisted docking or a Dynamic Positioning System? Or maybe you're selling your boat and think it will sell quicker and for a higher price if it offers newer systems, such as joystick steering. You simply might desire a "glass helm" with touchscreens in place of older gauges. Or maybe lightning struck your boat, killing the current system, and an all-in-one replacement sounds great. If your boat is powered by Volvo Penta, you might be able to accomplish these things by upgrading the current Electronic Vessel Control system aboard your boat to a newer version.

There's another consideration for an EVC upgrade: A potential lower price for the repair and/or replacement of some features. Because Volvo Penta compiled the parts necessary for the EVC upgrades—things such as steering modules, circuitry, control boxes, joysticks and such—into kits, upgrading to a newer EVC version might result in a lower cost than replacing any one of those parts as an individual item. Plus, you'd get an upgraded operating system, which comprises the latest engineering advancements/improvements that have been achieved over the years. The boat would be ready for future software add-ons as well. Individual situations vary, but Volvo Penta-engine owners should know to ask about this when in need of service.

Volvo Penta is leading the way with this industry-first operating-system-upgrade program. The following are some details gleaned from a discussion with Kevin Arnoux, business development and territory parts manager for Volvo Penta.

The EVC upgrade will take boats to EVC-E4, Arnoux says,

Kurshållning
188°M
5.2kt
180
200
7.6
15.8
GARMIN

TOUCH ME The helm of a 2003 boat looks nothing like a new boat's helm. Upgrade your engine's EVC and you can upgrade your helm, adding value, function, and a modern look.

PHOTOS: COURTESY VOLVO PENTA

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FAYAT
PORT PIERRE CANTO

VOLVO PENTA
IPS 600

UPGRADES FOR ALL Whether you own diesel IPS (pictured), gasoline sterndrive, or any fuel, drive or shaft combination, you might be eligible for this Volvo Penta EVC upgrade.

and is available for all marine-diesel engines going back to 2003. It is available only for vessels with EVC generations EVC-A to EVC-D. For reference, once a boat has EVC-E1, it does not need hardware to update to EVC-E4. The D3 diesel engine, and all gas engines, did not receive the EVC system until 2008/2009. Older D3 and gas engines cannot upgrade.

When you perform the upgrade, the boat moves from whichever version between EVC-A and EVC-D automatically up to the "base EVC-E4" system, according to Arnoux. At that juncture, you'll need to decide how much additional software you want. For reference, the base EVC-E4 operating system comes with the software's Trip-Meter/Cruise-Control/Single-Lever-Mode and PowerTrim Assist (where applicable). If you want Assisted Docking or DPS, you would then have that ability, but those require additional software on top of the EVC system upgrade.

SCAN ME

To see a video describing Volvo Penta EVC upgrades, scan this tag or go to https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=85S7VWwWu1o.

The Volvo Penta website offers a database into which you can enter your engine's serial number to determine the version of EVC in use, and thus which upgrades are available to you. (Visit volvopenta.com/marine/leisure-boating/upgrade-your-experience.) As for price, Arnoux cautioned that it varies by model year, EVC version and number of engines, but offered a range of between $5,000 and $15,000.

With this EVC-upgrade program, Volvo Penta offers boaters a new way to refresh and elevate their boat-ownership experience, save money on repairs, and potentially make the boat more attractive to prospective buyers.

JOY(STICK)FUL Upgrading your older Volvo Penta engines' operating system offers the opportunity to upgrade your boat-operating experience. Features vary by engine model, other factors, and the tier of EVC upgrade that you select.

PHOTOS: COURTESY VOLVO PENTA

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THX-AR-1N-DP **$151.69 kit**

G-Force Equalizer Trolling Motor Lift Assist Kit
THX-GFEQ-MG-R-DP **$142.27 kit**

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RBZ-11-4191-11 **$209.99 each**

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SUM-G1083 **$228.99 each**

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BIG BOYS (AND GIRLS) TOYS

From mild to wild, add a few of these water toys to your summer wish list.

BY JEFF HEMMEL

Schoolchildren and boating enthusiasts have one thing in common. And that is, both groups know that summer is the best time of year. The sun's out, the days are long, and the water beckons. Scratch that—schoolkids and boaters actually have two things in common: Both groups love summer, and both groups love their water toys.

In the early days, a boater's favorite water toys were simple. Throw a snorkel and fins aboard, maybe find a truck inner tube to pull behind the boat or buy a pair of Cypress Gardens combo skis, and nearly everyone aboard was happy. Today, the spirit of those tow toys lives on, but the toys themselves, well, they've gotten a little more complex. Snorkeling fins have evolved into personal jet-powered propulsion. Tire tubes have morphed into multipassenger inflatables with crazy designs and impressive performance. And those combo skis? They led not only to wakeboards and wakesurfers, but now battery-powered cousins that don't even need a boat.

It's a brave new world out there, but as those two groups mentioned above well know, it's a *fun* new world as well. Feel like you've been missing out? Have no fear—we've compiled a list of a few mild-to-wild candidates to get you started.

Summer's here, and it's time to get your fun on.

FLITEBOARD SERIES 5 WITH FLITE JET 2 E-FOIL

It's hard to argue with the allure of an e-foil. Not required to be tethered to a boat or wave for propulsion, and thanks to its smooth-running, below-the-water hydrofoil design, not left on the beach when conditions aren't perfect, it's like a space-age surfboard. Electric motors also fit in well with an e-foil's peaceful vibe, carving near silently through the water. Yes, there's a learning curve and some athletic skill required, but once you accept the challenge, you're not only instantly one of the coolest people on the water, you're also having a ridiculous amount of fun.

Fliteboard's Series 5 is a versatile, all-around platform that's great for beginners but can be easily customized as skill levels improve. Its 5-foot-8-inch length offers the volume and stability to get riders up and aqua-planing quickly while still giving experienced riders the performance they expect. Pair the board with a conical wing and the all-new Flite Jet 2 propulsion system, and you'll experience the first concrete example of the dramatic improvements made possible by Flite's relationship with Brunswick and Mercury Marine. Flite Jet 2 is

PHOTOS: COURTESY FLITEBOARD

Fliteboard's quietest propulsion system to date, promising an almost silent ride. Power and efficiency are also now comparable with Flite's folding-prop-driven alternatives, with the less-turbulent jet promising increased smoothness and agility, and even making it a suitable choice for ocean waves. The enclosed impeller also lessens worries about prop exposure, ideal for teaching younger or inexperienced riders.

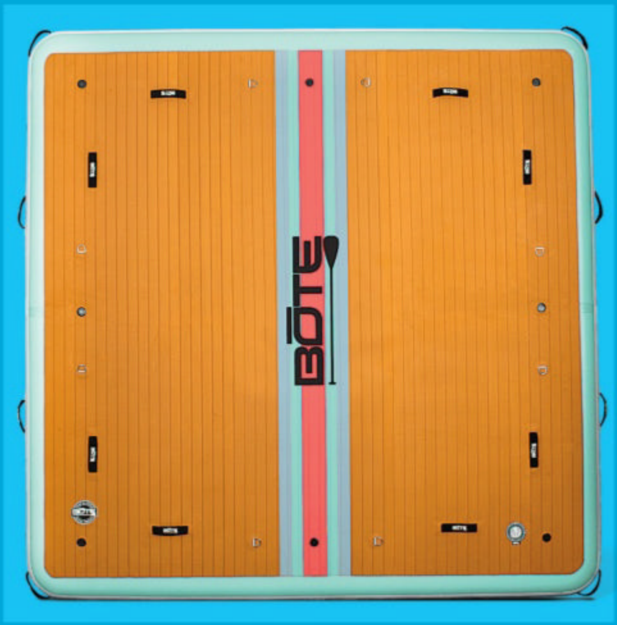
A trio of battery options are available, offering run times from 45 to 150 minutes. Control power delivery wirelessly via the pistol-grip Flight Controller remote. Its high-contrast display collects info from GPS, accelerometer and other sensors, as well as keeping tabs on battery life. Starting at $9,395; fliteboard.com

BOTE INFLATABLE DOCK

Drop-stitch construction changed the game for "rigid" inflatables, allowing everything from tender floors to stand-up paddleboards to take on impressive firmness yet still deflate and pack away when not in use. Bote's Inflatable Dock 10 takes advantage of the same technology to offer up a twist on the old-school lake raft. Rather than bulky barrels or foam that position the top deck high atop the water, the inflatable dock delivers a 10-foot-square platform a mere 8 inches in depth yet will support the weight of up to 1,500 pounds of crew and gear. Perhaps best of all, the dock's inflatable construction makes it easy enough to set up and pack away that it's realistic to take one out on the boat and whip it out for the ultimate sandbar party or raft-up.

The basic package comes with all you need to get that party started, including the dock, travel bag, carry sling, hand pump and repair kit. Military-grade PVC skin eliminates worries about any mishap, whether bumping or scraping into the dock or boat. A comfortable BVA foam pad topside keeps things comfortable underfoot and offers plenty of traction. Eight grab handles topside as well as an additional eight around the perimeter make it easy for a crew to haul the 72-pound dock in and out of the water. Multiple rafts can also be linked together via a D-ring/Velcro-strap connector. One minor downside? Getting the raft to the recommended 6 to 8 psi can be a workout with the manual pump. Get an electric inflator; it makes the job significantly easier.

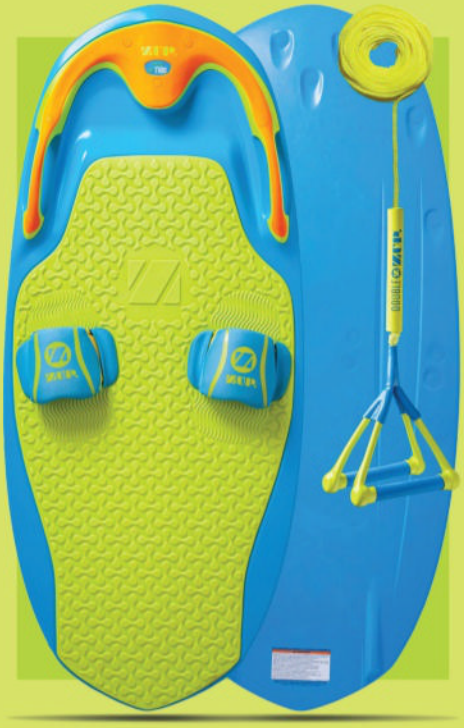
Consider a few accessories to unleash the dock's true potential. With standard Magnepod magnetic bases positioned around the perimeter, check out Bote's magnetic drinkware. The coolest add-ons, however, are likely the inflatable Aero couch and Adirondack chair. Add them to the mix to create the ultimate island oasis. Starting at $1,399; boteboard.com



PHOTOS: (FROM TOP) COURTESY BOTE, COURTESY ZUP

DOCK 10
BOTE
DOCK 10

PHOTOS: (FROM TOP) COURTESY BOTE, COURTESY ZUP



ZUP YOUGOTTHIS DELUXE COMBO

Boats can get crowded with water toys, especially when you're trying to satisfy everyone's interests and skill levels. And even with a wide selection of toys on hand, there's still the likelihood that someone is left frustrated at day's end, unable to get up on ski or board no matter how hard they try. Zup's unique YouGotThis board was designed for this very scenario. It's both an easy platform for kids to learn on and a versatile design that can mimic kneeboarding, wakeboarding, water-skiing and even wakesurfing for novice-to-intermediate riders.

At first glance, the Zup most closely resembles a kneeboard. Like the old-school favorite, its 4-foot-9-inch-by-2-foot-3-inch blow-molded plastic deck is topped with a generous EVA foam pad. One notable difference is that the top deck also features water-ski-like pockets to slide your feet into if you want a traditional, combo-like water-ski stance. For those who prefer to kneel, those soft pockets easily flatten and even provide a little additional cushioning for knees and elbows. Forward, twin rubber-padded grab handles are molded into left and right sides toward the front of the board. A molded-in hook (more on that shortly) is found at the forward tip. Below, molded-in fins and channels provide tracking, while hydrodynamic "dimples" promise easier side slides and 360s.

The Deluxe Combo includes Zup's unique dual-handle towrope. The rigid design is easily held in a variety of positions, but its key feature is that it can nestle into the aforementioned hook to effectively tow the board hands-free. The design is great for kids because they can ignore the rope and simply hang onto the molded-in handles. Adults can do likewise, getting into position before pulling the handle free. The board/rope combo makes for multiple possibilities. Lay or sit on the board sans towrope, remove the handle to "ski" or kneeboard, or switch the rope to one-hand and wakesurf—or just get creative and ride the Zup like an old-school disc. $319.99 for board, handle and carry bag; zup.com

O’BRIEN NEW-U

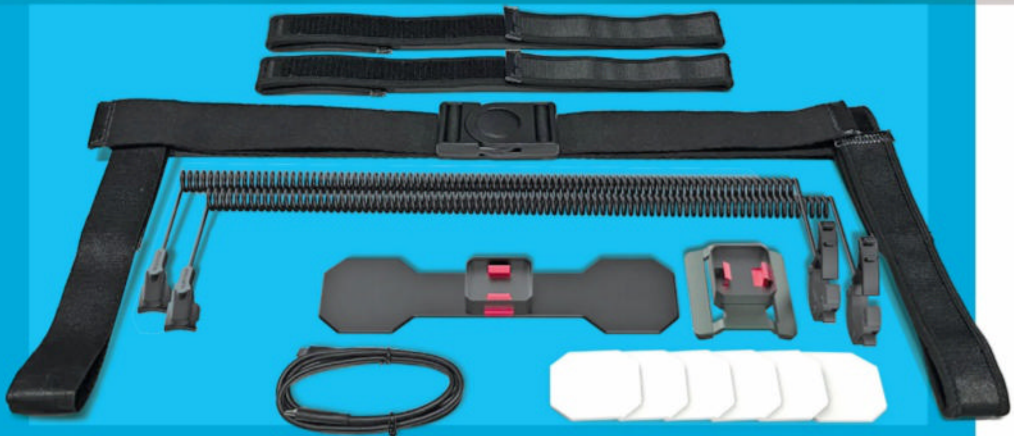
There’s a lot of cool stuff within the pages of this article, but allow us to briefly sing the praises of the basic inflatable. They’re relatively inexpensive, satisfy a wide range of ages and skill levels, and don’t require a lot of maintenance or storage space. Just blow them up, hitch to the back of your boat, and drive a few S-turn patterns. The kids will squeal, the adults will shout the inevitable “whoooooooo!” and everyone will likely leave with a smile on their face. That’s a quality summer day in our book.

The best bang for the buck? Consider a tube like O’Brien’s New-U, a deck-style design that riders lay atop and hang on for the ride. Several design features nudge the New-U high on our list of favorites. For starters, it’s gently curved from side to side. That not only reduces its wetted surface for more skids and speed, but it also helps riders feel more secure. Perfectly flat tubes can eject the outside rider during more-aggressive whip turns. Curved shapes also feel loose and playful, rocking and rolling their way across the water. Add sponsons on the tube’s bottom, just short of the left and right edges, which prevent rolling too far, and you’ve got a winner.

Like most inflatables, the New-U combines a PVC bladder with a durable nylon cover for colors, graphics, and to protect the more-vulnerable air bladder within. A soft EVA foam pad is comfortable on the body while protecting the bladder from things, such as life-jacket buckles, that scrape. Padded grab handles ensure that riders can hang on when the intensity factor increases. One of our favorite features, however, remains O’Brien’s simple Lightning Valve fill system. It features a large mouth and one-way flap to rapidly inflate via a dedicated pump or shop vac, then can be propped open to let all that air gush out when it comes time to pack things away. $443.99; obrien.com

PHOTOS: COURTESY O’BRIEN

WAYDOO SUBNADO



Remember those torpedolike propulsion systems in James Bond's *Thunderball*? Miniaturize them, provide options to strap one or a pair to arms or legs, link together, mount to a scuba tank, or even substitute in place of a stand-up paddleboard fin or below a kayak for paddleless propulsion, and you've got Waydoo's appropriately named Subnado. A roughly 15-inch-by-2.4-inch 3-pound cylinder that moves users through the water via lithium-ion battery and water-jet propulsion, the slim Subnado can easily be stashed in a boat storage compartment for diving, snorkeling or just playtime. Should your phone's battery die in any of those scenarios, the Subnado can also double as a power source.

Operation is easy and straightforward. Power is delivered via input from a simple trigger that can be placed on a finger or handlebar for one-handed operation. Hold the trigger to give the Subnado the juice, then release to stop the impeller from spinning. Mounting options include leg and forearm straps, a handlebar to allow the unit to pull you through the water like more-traditional sea scooters, a dual-unit handle option, and a mount that can fit the average fin box on a stand-up paddleboard.

The Subnado's 100-watt motor features three speed modes and can reach top speeds of about 3 miles per hour at depths to 60 feet via the thrust from its enclosed four-blade impeller. Maximum run time if you watch the speed settings extends up to 56 minutes; expect a little less in real-world use. A full recharge of the lithium-ion battery takes 1.2 hours via the unit's USB-C port. Starting at $429; waydootech.com

PHOTOS: COURTESY WAYDOO

WAKESURFING VS. OCEAN SURFING

Waves are waves—or are they?

By Ben “Benny G” Greenwood

What caught on as a rough-water activity for water-skiers and wakeboarders, wakesurfing has undeniably driven new participants and wakeboat buyers to experience riding the energy of a wave. The deep history of passionate ocean surfers speaks to just how drawn we humans are to the push that wave energy can create. It would be a tough stance to argue that anything which involves gliding across the surface of the water is not one of the branches of the surfing family tree. From traditional slalom skiing to flat-water skimboarding to modern-day foiling, nobody forgets their first time using one of Mother Nature’s most valuable resources as the medium that surely brought a smile to their face.

So how exactly does the tree trunk of these various disciplines relate to the heaviest newly grown branch? How do we compare surfing with wakesurfing? Is it similar? More fun? Easier? Do the skills cross over? While it would appear at first glance that the answers would be obvious, a deeper dive with elite athletes in each discipline—or in some cases, both—reveals more to the story.

TATIANA WESTON-WEBB: EVEN OLYMPIC MEDALISTS WAIT THEIR TURN

Growing up in Kauai, Hawaii, Tatiana “Tati” Weston-Webb lived in the optimal surfing environment, longing for nothing else. However, ocean surfing is not always optimal. “In ocean surfing, the wave doesn’t always come to you, or you are not next in the lineup,” she admits. Weston-Webb finds that when those elements finally do line up and it is your turn, the wave itself isn’t always perfect.

On the other hand, wakesurfing offers predictability. “You can count on the wave doing pretty much the exact same thing,” she says about taking her skills to wakesurfing. She found the benefit of being able to try new maneuvers without putting too much stock in capitalizing on the one of few waves caught in a day. Wakesurfing provides the “infinite wave,” as she calls it.

Wakesurfing did not initially mirror her ocean-surfing experience from a technique standpoint. Thinking that she would charge the wave and make the turns she would in the ocean, Weston-Webb needed just a few tips to make the right adjustments that she believes will allow people of all abilities to enjoy this close cousin to surfing.

“Wakesurfing is just so much more accessible to people anywhere who don’t have an ocean,” says Weston-Webb, who is sponsored by Body Glove, among other brands. “Anyone can try wakesurfing—it’s a great workout, and you have a great time with your friends and family.” That’s high praise from the 2024 Olympics Silver Medalist and third overall finisher on the Women’s Championship Tour.

PHOTO: COURTESY VOLVO PENTA

SILVER LINING Olympic surfing medalist Tatiana Weston-Webb likes the infinite wave provided by surfing behind a boat.

SCAN TAGS To watch videos of all four riders featured in this article shredding on the water both in the ocean and behind a boat, scan the tags or go to boatingmag.com/water-sports/wakesurfing-vs-ocean-surfing.

PHOTO: COURTESY VOLVO PENTA

CONTROLLED AGGRESSION Alyssa Spencer, the 16th-ranked ocean surfer on the Championship Tour, likes the predictability of wakesurfing.

ALYSSA SPENCER: FROM OCEAN SURFING TO WAKESURFING

Alyssa Spencer, currently ranked No. 16 in the Championship Tour, shared her insights into transitioning from the vast, unpredictable ocean to the controlled environment of wakesurfing.

"I have been a surfer my whole life—been introduced to wakesurfing only a couple of times in the past few years," Spencer says. "I began with ocean surfing—it is my profession, so I surf in the ocean almost every day, but I am super new to wakesurfing behind a boat."

Spencer noted the distinct differences between ocean surfing and wakesurfing, the latter of which "has such a different feel than surfing in the ocean because the power of the wave comes from the boat," she explains. "I was expecting a bit of a challenge the first few waves because learning how to get up and get going was new for me. Once I got the hang of it, it was so fun, which I was definitely expecting!

"The atmosphere on the boat was my favorite part of the experience!" she continues. "Everything from riding the wave to having music blaring and your friends to cheer you on as you surf is all pretty cool. It makes the experience of a day on the lake a lot of fun."

Mirroring Weston-Webb's experience, Spencer emphasizes the predictable nature of wakesurfing. "Wakesurfing is a much more controlled environment—the wave is pretty similar every time, so you can expect what you will get," she points out. "In the ocean, it is less controlled because you are dealing with Mother Nature, and you have to paddle into your waves. I felt like surfing on the wake was a challenge for me just because it feels so different from the ocean. The more time you put into something, the easier it gets."

Does wakesurfing prove beneficial in honing ocean-surfing skills? "I actually went straight from wakesurfing one day into a surf competition the next day and won the competition," Spencer says. "So,

PHOTOS: (FROM TOP) COURTESY VOLVO PENTA (2); COURTESY NAUTIQUE

I think it helped get me get warmed up to surf in small waves. Having the controlled environment in wakesurfing could give you the opportunity to get repetitions of learning new maneuvers and airs that could be translated into the ocean."

A wakesurfing and boating experience is more of an all-day adventure, while ocean surfing can be an hour or two, she explains. "Wakesurfing is a great alternative to learning how to surf in the ocean."

The biggest difference lies in how long the waves last. "I was able to ride for one to two minutes," Spencer says. "In the ocean, your rides aren't ever much longer than 10 to 20 seconds. On the Volvo Penta Forward Drive boats, the Water Sports Control lets surfers personalize settings and create custom waves, so experiencing the ability to create a perfect wave was something ocean surfers never experience."

NOAH FLEGEL: BLENDING A LIFE ON WATER

Noah Flegel, an accomplished wakeboarder and multitime world wakesurf and foil champion, shared his journey and insights from growing up on the water. "I've been on the water my whole life," Flegel says. "Coming out of the womb, water was a part of it all. My first memories were my parents pushing me into waves and being on a boat at 3 years old." His introduction to surfing was naturally intertwined with family beach days and the convenience of having the Intracoastal Waterway as his backyard.

Widely recognized as the most versatile towed-watersports athlete on the planet, Flegel's transition was driven by the desire to continually improve his board skills. "We would tow behind my friend's dinghy, longline on a surfboard," he explains. "Every day it felt like I was getting better, learning airs, carving harder." The time spent up on the board mastering the nuances of board control is what Noah credits his ability to translate his skills to

ALL GOOD For Noah Flegel, a champion wakesurfer and foiler, ocean surfing is another chance to get on the water with a board.

PHOTOS: COURTESY NAUTIQUE

PHOTO: COURTESY CENTURION

the other disciplines.

He noted the differences between wakesurfing and ocean surfing, particularly in terms of ease and consistency. "For sure, wakesurfing is easier," Flegel says, pointing out that it offers consistent waves, endless attempts, and often a coach right there to help you. Despite the controlled environment of wakesurfing, Flegel still appreciates the unique pleasures of ocean surfing. "Walking out into the waves is a simple pleasure of life, a blissful experience with Mother Nature," he says.

BOARD LIFE Four-time wakesurfing champion Sean Silvera grew up surfing in California and loves being able to do both.

SEAN SILVERA:

LAKE LIFE ADVOCATE

Four-time Pro Wakesurf Tour winner Sean Silvera has a unique perspective with his background in skateboarding, ocean surfing, flow riding and wakesurfing. "I started surfing at 13 years old with my first surfboard and later got into flow riding at 17 to 18 years old," Silvera says. "I started wakesurfing 10 years later." His move to Florida was driven by the desire for consistent wakesurfing access, something he found challenging in California.

He finds that there are technical differences between the disciplines. "The tricks felt the same, but the balance is different." Silvera explains: "Manipulating your weight forward and back was different. It actually took a while to break old habits, but having the board control helped me a ton."

When it comes to teaching someone who has never ocean-surfed or wakesurfed, Silvera sees value in both experiences. "You are going to have a good time either way," he believes. "I would probably push someone into a few mellow waves in an ocean-surfing set first, then head out for a boat session, because learning a deepwater start can take a few tries."

The "lake life" culture that includes wakesurfing keeps him coming back to it. "Boating with people who love the same things that you do provides for lifelong friendships," he says.

Elite athlete or first-timer, all can agree that time on the ocean and time on the boat are experiences we should all be so lucky to have. Add in the exhilaration and challenge of surfing a wave made by nature or a boat, and you have two activities that drive passionate life decisions such as living near the ocean or buying that new wakesurf boat. Making memories and learning a skill crosses over to another fun activity—and that's what keeps everyone coming back for more.

MADE TO ORDER Surfing behind a boat allows you to customize the wave to your exact likings, for wakesurfers of any ability, from beginner to pro level.

PHOTOS: (FROM TOP) COURTESY CENTURION, COURTESY VOLVO PENTA

MOVING FORWARD

Check out what professional surfers and wakesurfers such as Parker Payne, Alyssa Spencer and Tatiana Weston-Webb have to say about comparing wakesurfing with ocean surfing, and about their experiences riding behind boats powered by Volvo Penta's Forward Drive. Know that ocean access is available to these three, yet they still enjoy wakesurfing. Learn what these professionals have to say by scanning this tag or visiting youtu.be/AXwfvaTHVrg.

By Jim Hendricks

STABILIZED BINOCULARS

Electronically stabilized marine binoculars are a boon to boaters, allowing for increased magnification versus conventional binoculars because they compensate for shaky hands and rough seas to provide steady viewing.

These are different from the heavy, electrically powered gyroscopic binoculars that use a mechanical gyrostabilizer to create a stable field of vision and carry retail prices as high as $5,500.

Electronic stabilization allows for lighter, more-compact and much-less-expensive binocs. One of the most popular examples is Fujinon's Techno-Stabi TS-X 1440 binoculars ($1,099.95), which feature an electronic gyro-sensor that detects and corrects for any movement. Fujinon claims the world's highest vibration-correction performance in electronically stabilized binocs.

FUJINON
FUJIFILM

Fujinon's steady field of vision facilitates magnification that's twice as strong as most traditional marine binoculars, which can multiply magnification 7x; anything greater in conventional optics becomes too jittery to be useful in rough seas. But the stability of the TS-X 1440s allows for 14x with a 70-degree field of vision. Powered by four AA batteries and boasting a nonslip finish, the TS-X 1440 binoculars are waterproof and float.

A newcomer has recently entered the market: Koden's new Sirius 12 features electronic stabilization, an even smaller size and a more affordable price ($699). These lightweight yet rugged binoculars are manufactured in Japan using quality optics and internal components. With a 57.6-degree field of view, the 12x magnification is slightly less than the TS-X 1440 but still stronger than conventional 7x50 nonstabilized binoculars.

The Sirius 12 features a built-in six-axis electronic gyro-sensor to isolate the binocs from the rocking and rolling motion of the boat. The IPX7-waterproof electro-optics feature an easy-to-grip textured surface and an oil-repellent coating to protect the eyepiece and objective lenses. One AA alkaline battery provides 12 hours of operation.

PHOTOS: (FROM TOP) COURTESY KODEN, COURTESY FUJINON, COURTESY YAMAHA

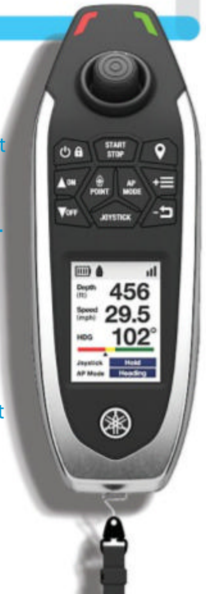
YAMAHA HELM MASTER REMOTE

Yamaha Marine has unveiled a wireless handheld remote control for its popular Helm Master EX low-speed docking, station-keeping and autopilot system. It gives boaters the freedom to move about the deck to handle lines or adjust fenders while remaining in complete control of the boat at all times.

Available in single- through quintuple-outboard configurations, the remote includes all Helm Master EX joystick functionality, autopilot control and man-overboard (MOB) functions. Captains can also monitor depth, heading and speed on the remote's LED display, which is especially handy underway when monitoring and changing course while using the autopilot functions.

The MOB system integrated into the handheld control will trigger the boat to decelerate to a stop in idle or immediately turn off the engines—depending on the situation—should the captain or crew go overboard. The system includes one captain and one crew fob, and will support up to eight MOB fobs.

StayPoint, FishPoint and DriftPoint functions are also at a captain's fingertips. The remote can be helpful when manning the anchor windlass. The remote is buoyant and waterproof, and it can be charged with a special cradle mounted anywhere on the boat. It will be available from dealers in fall 2025 and requires a Helm Master EX software update. Check it out at yamahaoutboards.com.



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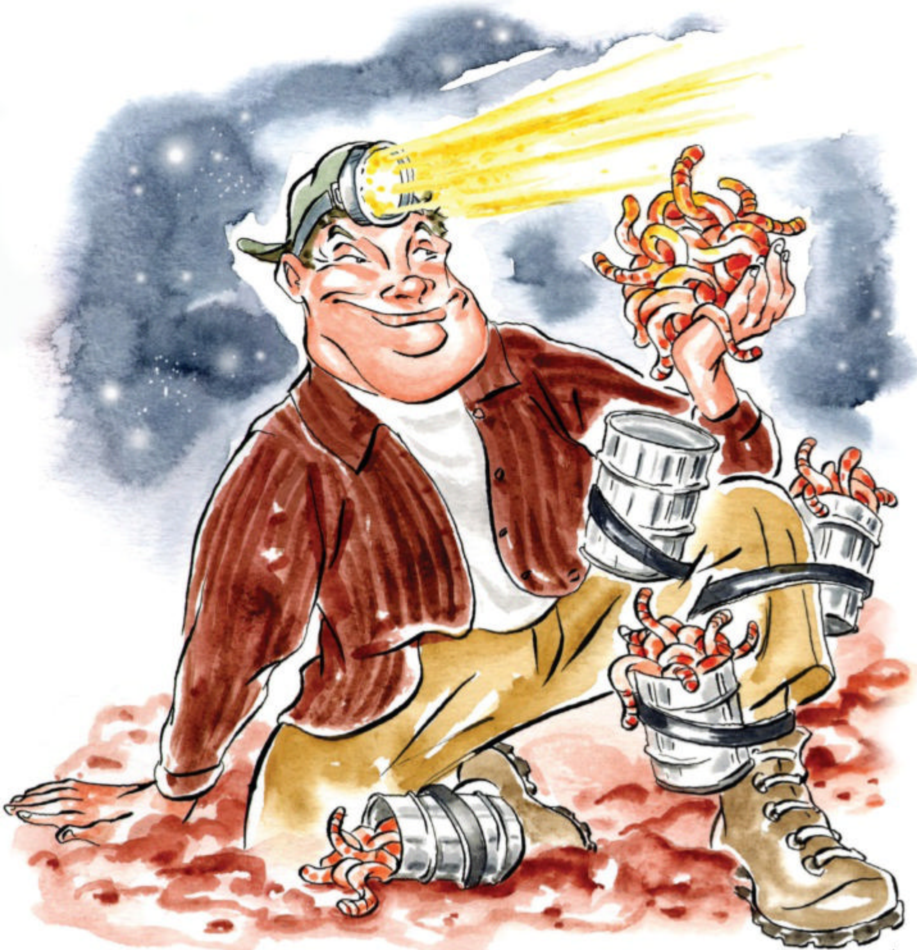
By Charles Plueddeman



AS THE WORM TURNS

World events and the price of everyone's favorite bait.

Loyal readers will recall that a few years ago, my good friend Chuck Larson started a specialized bait concession, Chuck's Organic Canadian Night Crawlers—Better Tasting Worms Catch More Fish, sold exclusively from a cooler in a back room at the Lake View Inn. Like Chuck's Organic Firewood Bundles, these wiggly worms are appealing to your visiting urban-angler types, who don't flinch at paying $8 for a cup of vigorous bait, because if it's organic, it must be better.

Chuck is hoping to expand his business to a few more locations in its third season but has discovered that even a lowly worm monger is not immune to the influence of current events.

"I can't take the uncertainty," Chuck said. "How can any businessperson plan ahead when the price of raw materials keeps fluctuating?"

"Is the worm market in a state of volatility?" I asked as we shared a pizza at the Lake View bar.

"They call them Canadian crawlers for a reason," Chuck replied. "They come from Canada. Which means they have been subject to these on-and-off tariffs. A worm tax!"

"Of course, *Lumbricus terrestris* is not native to Canada," offered always wise Wally from behind the bar. "They are invasive, brought to North America from Europe in the late 19th century. They thrive in southwestern Ontario, which offers the perfect combination of cool weather and soil conditions. Today, the region between Toronto and Windsor is known as worm alley."

"You mean you can't raise *Lumbricus terrestris* in a box in the basement?" I asked.

"No, no. They grow too slowly," Chuck replied. "It takes up to eight years for a Canadian crawler to reach market size. The industry relies on an army of worm pickers who go out at night with coffee cans strapped to their shins and pluck the worms by hand from the surface of leased pastures in Ontario. Brokers then meet in Toronto at a worm exchange and set the wholesale price. I swear I am not making this up. My worm source, Chris at Best Bait in Ohio, says that he sells 10 to 15 million Canadian crawlers a year, each one plucked off the ground at midnight in Ontario. And he's not even the biggest wholesaler in the country.

> The industry relies on an army of worm pickers who go out at night with coffee cans strapped to their shins and pluck the worms by hand from the surface of leased pastures in Ontario.

"So, slap a 25 percent tariff on worms crossing the border, and I'll have to raise my price to $10 a cup," Chuck continued. "Even sucker tourists won't pay that price. The alternatives are limited. I can eat some of that cost or resort to the black market. I know a guy in Buffalo who's working with a First Nation crew to smuggle worms by boat across the St. Lawrence River."

Last week, Chuck disappeared for a few days—we fear on a road trip to New York. Let's hope that border patrol hasn't deployed worm-sniffing dogs. Chuck wouldn't last long in prison.

ILLUSTRATION: TIM BOWER; PHOTO: MABEL PLUEDDEMAN

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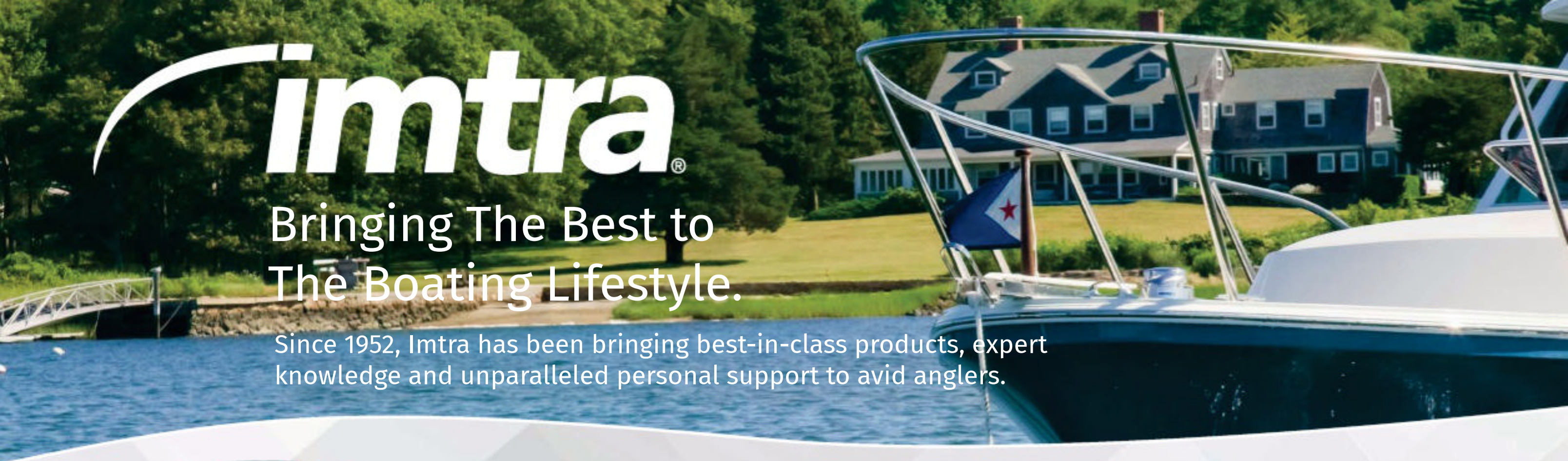

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